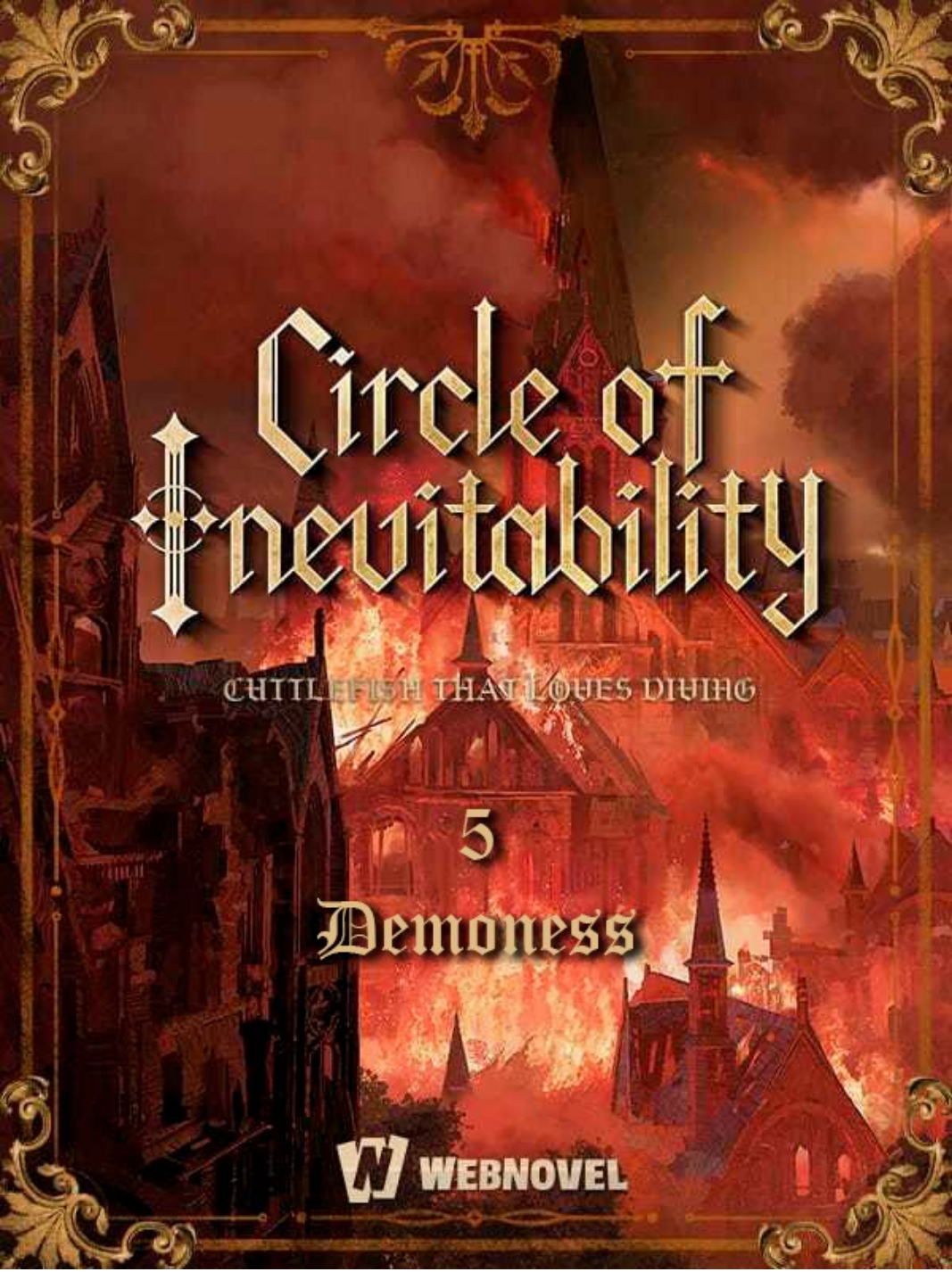
Circle of Inevitability
CUTTLEFISH THAT LOVES DIVING
5
Demoness
WEBNOVEL

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Chapter 736: Night

Can you accept such an outcome?

Inside an empty house in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Angoulême de François, wearing a lion headdress, stood by the window, gazing down at the gas streetlamps below, patiently waiting.

After losing contact, he and Hidden Blade had switched emergency communication methods. They aimed to quickly re-establish contact, even without Madame Hela's messenger.

Early the previous morning, as soon as he had wrapped up the Moran Avigny case, he immediately tried to locate Hidden Blade.

Finally, Hidden Blade Franca, dressed in her assassin outfit, emerged from the shadows.

Angoulême cut right to it and asked, "Did you take down Moran Avigny?"

"Otherwise?" Franca replied with a smile.

Although Overseer Perle's vortex warning hung over Franca's head like a sharp blade, preventing her from relaxing just because Moran Avigny was dead and she had the intel, Franca wouldn't let it ruin her mood or make her solemn or anxious.

The Major Arcana card holders would naturally worry about something so serious, and she and the others just needed to follow orders and complete the missions. No point fretting.

Plus, the intel they obtained was crucial and valuable. Either the Eternal Blazing Sun Church or the Demoness Sect would definitely be grateful!

Franca was filled with anticipation over this.

"It really was you guys..." Angoulême couldn't help but sigh.

Hidden Blade and her team really acted fast. They had mentioned dealing with a government minister, and not long after, they actually attacked and succeeded.

Franca covered for Lumian, saying, "We were waiting for Moran Avigny to walk into the mirror himself. Surprisingly, the Aurora Order suddenly assassinated him, forcing him into our trap early."

Combined with the scene details, Angoulême slightly nodded and said, "So it was just a coincidence..."

This aligned with what the Purifiers had confirmed.

Angoulême then asked, "So where's Moran Avigny now?"

"Dead," Franca said with a tongue click. "He was definitely a Mirror Person, and gave us lots of important intel."

"What intel?" Angoulême quickly asked.

Franca chuckled and raised her right hand, gently rubbing her thumb and index finger together. "Where's my informant fee?"

Angoulême said in exasperated amusement, "Don't forget I contributed a lot to the Moran Avigny operation. Even if I don't get spoils, it's no problem to hear the intel, right?"
Franca, who always prided herself on fairly "splitting loot," awkwardly cleared her throat.
"Just kidding. Just kidding. But that intel is super important. Your superior will definitely reward you. Don't forget to help me collect my fee!"
"Get to the point," Angoulême replied in a deep voice.
It wasn't that he was stingy about the fee, but Hidden Blade had twice emphasized how crucial the intel was, making him eager.
Franca omitted Tarot Club and Aurora Order details, but started from capturing Jebus to Overseer Perle's painted self appearing and Lumian's theory about the whole situation.
Initially, Angoulême stayed relatively composed. Mirror People problems barely factored into Purifier expectations. But when Moran Avigny was tricked into revealing Roselle Gustav led the Mirror People, Angoulême's head started buzzing louder and louder.
Why do Hidden Blade and the others always get mixed up in such major situations?
How long has it been since the Hostel incident? Why is there another "vortex"?
After Franca finished, Angoulême couldn't help but raise his right hand and pinch his throbbing, headdress-concealed forehead. His emotions were so scrambled he was speechless.
Franca smugly asked, "How's that? Project Vortex, the Mirror People, and intel about a hidden traitor—pretty important stuff, right?"
Noticing Angoulême's grave gaze and slightly moving, teeth-grinding mouth, Franca instinctively added, "Don't blame me! We're not causing these problems, Trier's just uniquely prone to all kinds of chaos. We're victims too!"
Angoulême slowly exhaled and said, "I'll... submit this intel... tonight. I won't forget to pass along my informant's reward request. What do you want?"
At the mention of "tonight," Angoulême's emotions surged and he paused a moment.
He had just finished his workday an hour ago and left Saint Vièvе Cathedral. Now he had to return!
I'm Agent 007, not some societal slave working from midnight to midnight every damn day! Angoulême inwardly cursed, but still appeared calm, reliable, and emotionally stable.
Franca deeply pondered and said, "All the Pleasure potion

ingredients."
She had considered her Affliction potion could be rewarded by the Demoness Sect, but not Jenna's. She could only rely on the authorities.
"Aren't you already at Pleasure?" Angoulême muttered, giving up asking. He nodded, "I'll help get it."
He didn't ask about Hidden Blade's Pleasure potion preparations, just as he didn't ask how she and her crew survived facing a demigod's painted self.
Franca was overjoyed at 007's promise.
Getting Pleasure from the Church and Affliction from the Demoness Sect, surely Madam Judgment would reward me too. I sold this one intel three times... I can now understand Lumian's glee at triple-dipping mission rewards!
Angoulême rubbed his temples and muttered, "There are Cardinals not from the Sun pathway, and way more diocese bishops. I really don't know what we'll uncover next. I just hope the impact isn't too massive."
He meant the April Fool's insider in the Eternal Church. With a clear lead, it wouldn't be hard for that party to be discovered, even if they worked through a Broker.
Without waiting for Franca's reply, Angoulême pondered a moment and said, "The humanoid Sealed Artifact transaction is approved. Let me know the transaction details anytime."
"It's finally approved..." Franca criticized the bureaucracy and curiously asked, "What's the story with that humanoid Artifact?"
She had encountered the humanoid Sealed Artifact during the sea prayer ritual and knew its abnormal power.
Angoulême shook his head. "I'm not cleared for that intel. All I know is she used to be a Sequence 4 Spectator demigod. Later she suddenly went insane, but I don't know if she went mad before an evil god corrupted her, or because of the corruption."
"It was probably the latter," Franca said thoughtfully. "Aren't Spectator Beyonders usually emotionally stable and hard to lose control?"
Angoulême rejected Franca's statement. "From what I know, Spectators normally don't have issues. But when they do, it gets really messy."
"True," Franca thought of I Know Someone.
After chatting a while, Angoulême bid Hidden Blade farewell and left the empty room.
Before leaving, he quickly reviewed the intel, then inwardly sighed with a heavy heart.
Aren't there way too many mystical incidents in Trier?

...
In the market district, Jenna seized a chance to act as a Witch again.
Wearing a black cloak and dark dress, she walked the shadowed street, pondering new acting directions as she looked for an opportunity.
I can't just equate Witches with bad deeds. Sinister, dark acts aren't necessarily bad...
Among the Witch legends I've gathered so far, many focused on Witches using mystical and sinister dark powers to help others fulfill desires, tempting them to stumble...
These legends likely contain remnants of acts by Demonesses posing as Witches. I could try imitating them. Plus, tempting others into depravity is a deeper way for an Instigator. Pleasure's acting also corrupts the target...
Yes, the mystical powers of sinisterness and darkness, tempting depravity and depravity brings calamity...
Jenna's thoughts gradually became more clear.
With these in mind, she turned onto Rue Anarchie, intending to find a chance to act as a Witch on this chaotic street.
After a few steps, Jenna suddenly heard someone singing hysterically, "Trier, a city dressed in gold,
"A ball that endures 'til dawn unfolds;
"Chicken roasted, dripping with oil's grace,
"A castle cake to fill each eager embrace.
"A bow-tied attendant glides 'mongst the guests,
"Merrily dancing with joy and delight.
"My beloved, hidden 'midst the crowd,
"Among them, my love resides,
"In the Capital of Joy, forever Trier!"
This voice... Jenna peered from the shadows at Auberge du Coq Doré and saw Lumian, in a thick brown jacket, sitting on the third floor windowsill, holding a green liquid-filled bottle.
Hadn't he gone to the Aurora Order and never returned? Jenna frowned and stepped out of the shadow.
Lumian noticed her and smiled. He leaped down from the third floor, landing steadily before her.
"Why are you here?" Jenna asked with concern.
Lumian smiled casually. "I suddenly missed this place. Came back for a drink."
Sensing Lumian's strange excitement, Jenna pondered a moment then asked, "Did something happen?"
"No," Lumian denied quickly. He emphasized, "I'm fine."
With an absinthe bottle in hand, he headed towards Rue

Anarchie's exit. Jenna trailed closely behind, not inquiring further.
Under the crimson moonlight and scattered gas lamps, the silent Lumian suddenly smiled and announced, "I'm about to start blaspheming. No, it's already begun."
He didn't turn around and kept walking.
"Haven't you been blaspheming all this while?" Jenna cautiously probed with Lumian's usual self-deprecation.
Lumian's gaze stayed fixed ahead as he smiled. "It's different this time."
He quickened his pace and didn't mention it again.
Jenna glanced at Lumian's muddy leather boots and the dirty but dry surroundings. She pursed her lips and didn't press further.
Lumian continued walking, occasionally humming a tune, occasionally chatting with Jenna and joking with a smile.
He made his way back to his rented apartment and entered his room.
Jenna stood quietly in the living room, watching Lumian close the bedroom's wooden door.
In the dark room, lit only by crimson moonlight, Lumian sat at his desk, unfolded a piece of paper, and picked up a fountain pen.
He didn't light the gas wall lamp, nor create a blazing fireball. In the pitch-black, he positioned the pen under the faint light.
Amidst paper rustling, Lumian's smile faded, and his wrist slowed.
Finally, he penned the unusually brief letter: "Honorable Madam Magician, I'd like to meet you."

Chapter 737: Opinion

After having the messenger dispatched to deliver the letter, Lumian sat at his desk, gazing at the dark curtains that seeped in the crimson moonlight, patiently awaiting Madam Magician's arrival.

After an indeterminate period of time, a resplendent starlight emerged from the dark room, coalescing into the figure of Magician.

She had changed into a brownish-yellow cotton dress with white trimmings.

"Good evening, Madam Magician," Lumian said with a glance around. "I have something important to discuss."

Magician grasped his meaning and immediately condensed the surrounding darkness into an illusory glass barrier, curling up to block out the infiltration of the crimson moonlight and the sounds from outside.

"What's so important?" Madam Magician inquired once secrecy was ensured.

Lumian conjured a blazing white flame to use as a chandelier. After a few moments of silence, he said, "I've confirmed the origins of the lizard-like elf."

"It's not an evil god from outside the barrier?" Madam Magician wore a thoughtful expression.

Lumian's lips curled into a slight smile. "An evil god in a way, but one not from outside the barrier."

Magician frowned and said, "Give me the details."

Lumian recounted in his deep voice his pact with Penitent Baynfel and the corresponding negative effects. He described seeing the True Creator idol and a lizard-like elf in the secret cathedral of the Aurora Order, as well as the illusory scene suspected to be a divine kingdom.

Madam Magician didn't interrupt him, listening attentively. Then, she let out a long sigh and said, "In fact, I had suspected that the lizard-like elf was related to Him, but whether it was the Spectator pathway's Mythical Creature form or the Hanged Man pathway's Mythical Creature form, they were clearly different from that elf. Nothing similar had manifested in the past five to six years. Additionally, the two experts at decrypting and deciphering dreams were more inclined to believe that the elf came from an evil god outside the barrier. This led me to abandon that guess.

"From the looks of it, that entity had been involved in Cordu's catastrophe for a long time.

"That's the only explanation that's complete. How could He, who's

been listening and watching, not notice such a major incident that has been unfolding for so long and involves members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society? How could He not take advantage of the situation?"
"What does He want?" Lumian's expression subtly contorted.
Magician stared at Lumian for a few seconds before sighing again.
"I can only confirm one goal. That is to create a Beyonder capable of rapid digestion and rapid advancement along the Hunter pathway.
"Think about it. It's been just over half a year since you became a Hunter. You're already a Sequence 5 Beyonder, and your Reaper potion has been greatly digested. Perhaps in two to three months, you can consider breaking through to godhood and advancing to Sequence 4, becoming a demigod.
"On this 'journey,' whether it was the fake Angel status brought about by sealing Termiboros, the obtained boons of the Inevitability pathway, or some tempering and digestion opportunities filled with calculated arrangements, they all contributed significantly to your growth.
"He wants a Red Priest and is pushing for a decisive battle between the Red Priest and the Primordial Demoness.
"I was worried that your advancement might be going too smoothly, but now it seems that a price has already been exacted for what fate bestowed, and a deposit has been paid."
Under the blazing white flames, Lumian spoke in a deep, raspy voice, "I'd rather remain an ordinary person."
Madam Magician shook her head with a complex smile.
"As the apocalypse approaches, with Aurore's background and condition, even if no catastrophe had occurred in Cordu, it's inevitable that you'll encounter one eventually. Have you forgotten the helplessness and pain of being an ordinary person in that catastrophe?"
Lumian clenched his fists involuntarily and lowered his head. "I-I just don't want to obtain power this way."
Madam Magician didn't dwell on the topic and said, "He definitely has ulterior motives. For example, a humanoid Sealed Artifact like you can effectively gather evil god influences around you wherever you go, exposing their schemes in advance and giving us more time to deal with them."
Lumian remained silent and didn't respond.
Madam Magician glanced at him and asked with an obvious sigh, "What's your next move?"
Lumian's body trembled slightly, as if he couldn't suppress his emotions.

Gritting his teeth, he said, "I want to punch Him!"
Upon saying this, Lumian's eyes turned bloodshot.
To be honest, he had never harbored a firm desire to seek revenge on a deity. His original plan was to eliminate the key members of April Fool's and the Sanson family of the Sinners organization. Then, he would work hard to become an Angel and extract most of Termiboros's strength. Then, he would release the weak Angel of Inevitability and kill Him.
He knew that the source of Cordu's catastrophe was actually the entity known as Inevitability. However, due to the vast disparity between them and his natural fear of deities, he had only occasionally cursed and spoken harsh words. He hadn't truly put the other party on his revenge list.
And now, he wanted those damned deities to fall from heaven, like meteors streaking through the night sky!
Madam Magician looked at Lumian with a serious expression and asked, "Do you know what you mean by that?"
"I know," Lumian nodded slowly. "I've been waiting all day before requesting to meet you because I've been questioning myself seriously."
He had questioned himself again and again, sometimes in anger, sometimes in sorrow. When he calmed down a little, he questioned himself again.
Madam Magician regarded him with a familiar pity in her eyes.
This time, Lumian knew clearly what she was pitying.
A human yearning to punch a deity.
Lumian gazed back at the Major Arcana card holder, his gaze unwavering.
After a while, Magician nodded slightly and said, "You're telling me the target because you want me to provide effective advice on your idea and make it a little more feasible?
"Yes, my suggestion is that before Mr. Fool awakens to some extent, endure your impulses and work hard to improve yourself. Only by becoming a demigod can you have a chance to sit at that table of cards—of course, that depends on whether you appear there in the form of cards or chips. Don't be disheartened. It's the same for you, me, and the other demigods. Our will and choices can also play an important role at critical moments. We can also exploit the card players."
Lumian asked in a deep voice, "Will Mr. Fool—will he help me?"
Madam Magician nodded solemnly. "Yes."
Unknowingly, her eyes grew brighter. "Mr. Fool will protect us. All of us are willing to make sacrifices for this world, but we can't be sacrificed."

Lumian suddenly let out a sigh of relief, as if he had lost all strength. He couldn't stand steadily, and his body swayed slightly.
He had been suppressing his emotions with all his might until now.
Madam Magician looked at him and pondered for a moment before saying, "I must remind you that that entity should already be aware of your thoughts. This is because you displayed an abnormality in front of His idol.
"I'm not criticizing you; I'm just stating a fact. In that situation, even Clowns and Spectators would find it difficult to control their emotions and expressions, let alone an Ascetic like you."
"I know..." Lumian replied with difficulty.
Before Madam Magician exposed him, he had harbored a glimmer of hope.
Magician chuckled and said, "That's also a positive thing. The fact that you're still alive suggests that you're still useful to Him and can be used. You haven't repaid the full price that fate has exacted of you. As long as you don't give up on yourself or participate in actions that can disrupt His important plans, He will ignore your hatred. He might even continue to allow you to encounter opportunities and obtain things until you step onto the stage He has decided for you.
"It's frustrating, but that's the reality. In the eyes of an existence like Him, you are currently just a speck of dust. He can reduce you to dust at any time without worrying about your thoughts."
After a long silence, Lumian asked in a slightly hoarse voice, "You mean, before Mr. Fool awakens, I'm to make full use of that entity's arrangements?"
Magician nodded slightly and said, "Using an enemy's resources to strengthen yourself is also a way of seeking revenge. Of course, this requires greater caution and restraint. As I mentioned earlier, a price is always exacted for what fate has bestowed. You have to weigh whether you're willing to pay the corresponding price in the future."
Lumian looked down at the floor illuminated by the incandescent white light and said, "Okay."
He then asked, "When will Mr. Fool begin awakening?"
"No one knows," Madam Magician replied with a smile. "But there's no need to be disheartened by this answer. I foresee that we tarot card holders will play an important role in this matter. Let's work hard together."
"How do we?" Lumian pressed.
Madam Magician pondered for a moment and said, "First, focus on yourself. Then, wait patiently for the right opportunity."

The right opportunity? Lumian couldn't fathom how they, the Minor Arcana card holders, were involved in awakening Mr. Fool. All he could do was cautiously ask, "Madam, did you deliberately place Penitent on the messenger list?"

Without Baynfel's negative influence, he wouldn't have had a chance to see the lizard-like elf in the True Creator's hidden cathedral.

"Yes and no," Madam Magician replied. "I know he has a certain connection to that entity. I believe our collaboration with the Aurora Order is fragile. You were sent as an undercover agent, not a true member. You might encounter certain problems in the future, and there's a chance that he will bring about new possibilities. That's why I placed him on the messenger list to see if fate will allow you to choose him. I never expected this to unveil a very important mystery."

Lumian had long grown accustomed to Madam Magician's cryptic responses. He swiftly filtered through her thoughts.

He spoke in a deep voice, "Madam, I wish to explore Mr. Hanged Man's Blue Avenger soon."

Chapter 738: Original Arrangement

Magician concurred tersely. "No problem. I understand the urgency. I'll bring you there once Mr. Hanged Man and I confirm the time."

Lumian fell silent for a moment before saying, "Thank you."

Madam Magician pondered for a moment and reminded him, "But don't be too hasty. Emperor Roselle once said, 'More haste, less speed.'

"It's not just because impatience blinds you and affects your judgment, causing you to make wrong choices in many matters. It's also because consuming the potion to advance has a requirement on your mental state. You should be well aware of this."

"I understand," Lumian said with a sigh.

Madam Magician glanced around and joked, "You were really tense just now. We've been talking this whole time, but you didn't even remember to invite me to sit down.

"Yes, the School of Truth's vortex clearly involves higher-level forces. We'll take over the subsequent investigations. Your primary mission is to locate the relatively important Mirror People according to what Moran Avigny had shared. I suspect that something in the special mirror world is an important part of the vortex.

"This time, you've obtained crucial information. We Major Arcana card holders won't be stingy with the rewards. Of course, it's for your team, not just you. The exact distribution is up to you."

Upon hearing the last sentence, Lumian suddenly fell into a daze. He muttered to himself, "Again...

"Is this also what fate has bestowed?"

"I can't say for sure that's not the case," Madam Magician replied with a self-deprecating smile. "Your psychological and mental state are better than I expected. You haven't reached the point where you need treatment again, but you seem to have suffered from the aftereffects of the trauma known as Fate's Bestowment. Everything you see seems arranged as if by fate's hand."

Without waiting for Lumian's response, she added, "Actually, there's no problem with that. It's good to be vigilant, but don't put too much pressure on yourself. Your mind is like an eraser. If you're too tense, it'll snap. You can be vigilant about details, but you have to relax. Think about it. You can't resist a real arrangement anyway. Why make yourself unable to sleep well, eat well, and become more and more neurotic?"

"Yes." Lumian had to admit that Madam Magician had a point.

Magician expressed satisfaction at Lumian's ability to self-regulate.
"Of course, once you discover any arrangements that are clearly problematic, remember to inform me immediately by reciting the honorific name.
"For the reward this time, I'll include the Sequence 4 potion formula of the Hunter pathway, facilitating your quest for items on the Blue Avenger. As for the rewards for the Two of Cups, Seven of Cups, and Four of Swords, I don't know either. It mainly depends on what Judgment, The Hermit, and the others will offer."
Lumian had no objections to this arrangement. Even if Madam Magician didn't mention it or believed that the information about the vortex and the Mirror People wasn't worth the demigod-level potion formula, he would take the initiative to request that the other party provide it first before making up for the missing contributions.
As Lumian regained his composure, a question crossed his mind.
"Madam, Mr. K of the Aurora Order has already divulged my contributions in front of the True Creator's idol, requesting Him to put me up as a candidate Oracle. When an official Oracle falls into danger, I will become the prime candidate to replace them. When the time comes, will I truly become a certain Mr. of the Aurora Order?
"In addition, Mr. K also promised material rewards in the next few days."
Magician nodded slightly and said, "The Aurora Order's organizational structure is quite peculiar. Although Oracles have a Saint directly above them, most Oracles can directly hear the ravings of that entity and His instructions, giving them strong autonomy. Yes, they still follow the orders of their Saint superiors and report to them on most matters, but there are a few matters that completely bypass their superiors. Recommending a candidate Oracle is one of them.
"An oracle of God can only come from God's revelation."
After a brief sigh, Magician chuckled and said, "As long as there's no major problem with the screening, feel free to accept the material rewards. You've already received enough of fate's bestowments. Any more and there won't be any substantial changes.
"I don't think being an Oracle will happen. The Aurora Order's Oracles have a fixed preaching area. It can't beat letting you run around and trigger various hidden dangers of evil gods. It will help you digest the potion. Uh..."
At this point, Magician's expression gradually turned odd.

Lumian wasn't in a hurry to inquire. He waited for the Major Arcana card holder to take the initiative to explain.
After a few seconds, Magician maintained her expression and hesitantly said, "Perhaps, that person's original arrangement was for you to be a certain Mr. for a while.
"The Hunter pathway's Sequence 4 is known as Iron-blooded Knight. It makes all consumers transform into men. Its ritual requires the formation of a team of at least 30 people. They should be able to comprehend your intentions based on your gaze and actions after long periods of nurturing—as though all of you are nearly one. The higher the team's strength and tacit understanding, the better the effect of the ritual." Think about it. What's the most striking characteristic of the Aurora Order? It's fanaticism.
"After becoming a certain Mr., you will undoubtedly have your own jurisdiction and a large number of subordinates. They are fanatical and will completely follow the orders of a deity's oracle like you. With some training, they can fulfill the requirements of the ritual. What you need to worry about is how to increase their strength and tacit understanding to make the ritual more effective."
Wh— The original plan was for me to become an Oracle after digesting the Reaper potion, allowing me to establish a team to complete the ritual as quickly as possible. *How can I carry out this ritual now?* Franca and the others are without a problem, but there are too few of them... Lumian couldn't help but frown.
Upon seeing this, Madam Magician chuckled and said, "The Church of Knowledge, well-versed in the Hunter path, offered an alternative."
"Of course, the prerequisite is that you can tame Ludwig. Angels can offset most quantity requirements."
"Angel level?" Lumian finally obtained information about Ludwig's power from Madam Magician.
"Yes." Madam Magician didn't elaborate further.
Taming Ludwig? All I can do now is "bribe" him and give simple commands... Lumian fell deep into thought.
Madam Magician glanced at him and said, "You can wait until you digest the Reaper potion and visit the City of Exiles, Morora, before deciding which method to use to meet the ritual's requirements."
"Right, let's discuss the vortex details through letters."
Lumian nodded and watched as Madam Magician vanished into thin air.
Gazing at the gradually expanding dark border, he closed his eyes and recalled everything he had seen and heard that day.
Unbeknownst to him, he clenched his fists tightly, and blazing

white flames surged from his fists, burning fiercely.
Jenna sat in an armchair in the living room, quietly waiting for Lumian to open the door and leave. The sound of gnawing and chewing echoed from the dining room.
Lumian carried the unfinished bottle of absinthe to the balcony, settled into a chair, and took a sip.
Jenna approached him with light footsteps and observed him for a few seconds. "You're in better shape."
"You can tell that too?" Lumian asked nonchalantly without turning his head.
Jenna pulled up a chair and sat down, sneering.
"Your silent and reserved demeanor makes me feel more at ease than your previously excited and talkative demeanor."
Lumian gazed at the night outside the balcony and remained silent for a long time. Jenna didn't ask any questions either.
Suddenly, Lumian spoke in a deep voice, "I saw that lizard-like elf."
Jenna had heard him talk about Cordu and understood what it meant. She said in surprise, "Didn't you go to the Aurora Order to meet Mr. K? Why... Is that lizard-like elf related to the Aurora Order?"
"It stems from the one they believe in," Lumian's voice seemed to emerge from the depths of darkness.
"No wonder..." Jenna suddenly understood Lumian's previous state. "Madam Judgment mentioned that the one the Aurora Order believes in is close to Mr. Fool in power..."
It wasn't something mortals could face directly, let alone exact revenge on!
After a brief silence, Jenna understood and said, "Did you just meet Madam Magician?"
"You've grown quite smart after drinking the Witch potion," Lumian turned to Jenna.
Jenna couldn't help but ask, "Can't Hunters speak nicely?"
She paused for a moment before adding, "What did Madam Magician say?"
"She said to endure it for now and wait for Mr. Fool to wake up before considering what to do next," Lumian replied simply.
Jenna tersely acknowledged, momentarily at a loss for words.
After a moment, she stood up and went to Ludwig's side in the dining room to retrieve a glass from the balcony. She snatched the bottle of absinthe from Lumian's hand and poured a third of it for herself.
Jenna had just taken a sip of the dreamy green liquid when her face instinctively furrowed.
"Heck, why do you people like to drink absinthe? It tastes awful!" As

a former Showy Diva, Jenna had drunk plenty of alcohol, but she still couldn't accept the taste of absinthe.
Lumian scoffed but didn't offer an explanation.
Jenna casually chatted, "I once read a book about a writer whose name I can't remember. He said that those who enjoy absinthe either use it to pretend they are experienced or use it to reminisce about their experiences..."
Lumian listened quietly, picked up the bottle, and took another mouthful.
The slightly burning alcohol slid down his throat, leaving behind a familiar bitterness.

Chapter 739: Reminder

In the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702 on 9 Rue Orosai.

Franca waited a while for Jenna to return.

She sniffed and asked in confusion, "Have you been drinking?"

Didn't Jenna say she was going to the market district to find an opportunity to act as a Witch?

Could it be that she had been deliberately drinking and engaging in sting operations to carry out law enforcement?

Jenna removed her black cloak and said to Franca with a solemn expression, "I ran into Lumian."

"Huh?" Franca was taken aback. "He's in the market district? Didn't he go to the Aurora Order to meet Mr. K? I thought he hadn't returned because he was being tested and preparing to choose a reward..."

Jenna didn't hold back and recounted Lumian's condition and words in almost complete detail.

"Is that so..." Franca's emotions became complicated.

She understood Lumian's current feelings and sympathized with the plight of Muggle Aurore. She still remembered that the Ancient Sun God, suspected to be from the Third Epoch and whom the Aurora Order believed in, had returned in some form. There was a high chance that the Ancient Sun God was an earlier transmigrator, a transmigrator like them!

Transmigrators harming transmigrators... It's the way of the April Fool's group; likewise for the Ancient Sun God... Franca sighed silently and decided to summon Madame Hela's messenger later. She would inform the vice president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society about the School of Truth's vortex operation and the True Creator's role in the catastrophe at Cordu, and request a gathering of all members soon.

It wasn't that she wanted to publicly warn all members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society at the gathering about the True Creator and the Ancient Sun God. Certain matters could become catastrophic if people below a certain level knew about them. After all, that entity possessed the ability to know whenever He was mentioned.

Franca hoped to raise the vigilance of Hela and the other organizers of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society before indirectly alerting the other members through them.

Furthermore, Franca found the Overseer of the School of Truth formidable, but that wasn't the most terrifying aspect about her and her accomplices.

Franca's greatest unease stemmed from the Broker's ability and willingness to unite the evil god sects, which had been in disarray, fighting independently and even attacking each other. The Hostel plan was the embryonic form of such a change, and perhaps the vortex incident represented the outcome in a stepped sequence.

Facing the evil god cults that had begun to collaborate, Franca wanted the factions she associated herself with to take action and collaborate as well. To this end, she was willing to share information about the vortex and the Mirror People with Madame Hela, a demigod likely backed by the Evernight Church, free of charge.

She had already written and sought Madam Judgment's opinion on this matter, and her response was affirmative.

"How is he now?" Franca asked with concern, contemplating whether to drink with Lumian until dawn to express her support and comfort him.

"He's fine for now," Jenna replied after a few seconds of contemplation. "Perhaps it's also because the one the Aurora Order believes in is far superior to him. Although the hatred is real, it's very intangible and can't be acted upon for a long time."

She had authority to speak on such matters.

Franca tersely acknowledged her words and contemplated her next move.

At dawn, Franca visited Clarice immediately and reported her encounter to the Demoness of Black. The latter expressed her approval and inquired about Franca's recent needs. Franca didn't stand on ceremony and mentioned her desire for the ingredients for the Affliction potion.

Back then, the Demoness of Black didn't agree or reject her request. She only instructed Franca to visit in two days and to find the Mirror People that Moran Avigny had mentioned as soon as possible. She could provide any assistance Franca needed.

As for the Mirror People that Moran Avigny had mentioned—Griffith, Palia, and Caratanza Tamara—none of them used their real names in reality. They could only rely on their unclear identities to investigate. Franca hoped to obtain official "assistance" through 007, and she also wanted to see if there were any members of the Moses Ascetic Order in the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society. This was one of the reasons why she had requested a full-scale gathering soon.

The only Mirror Person who could be identified was Trier's Deputy Commissioner of Police, Sport. Franca had investigated the situation before dawn and realized that the Mirror Person had vanished. It appeared that the fleeing Overseer had used some

method to alert the Mirror People. For example, news of Moran Avigny's accident had quickly spread.

...

After downing the last of the absinthe and saying goodbye to Jenna, Lumian rubbed his temples and headed back to his bedroom.

Under the crimson moonlight pouring through the curtains, he noticed a folded letter on the table.

Madam Magician? Didn't she just leave not too long ago? Lumian frowned and picked up the letter.

It was indeed from Madam Magician, with a few short paragraphs:

"I forgot to mention we ran into Loki while tracking the School of Truth's Overseer.

"His condition has changed significantly. It seems something went wrong during his resurrection after the sea prayer ritual. This led to the owner of Castle Dylan, the former Secret Order leader, being resurrected inside him somehow.

"Zaratul has come back from the dead and become the Celestial Worthy's attendant. Right, but He hasn't fully taken over Loki's body, and Loki hasn't died completely. This has turned them into an unstable, stitched-together monster in mind and soul.

"For now, don't try finding Castle Dylan and expending Loki's remaining resurrection. It's best to avoid any situations where he could track you down."

Zaratul... Franca had said the former Secret Order leader played a major role in Emperor Roselle's rise, but ultimately betrayed the Emperor... The Sauron family's Vermonda Sauron seemed to have gone insane from His and the Emperor's schemes, prompting Him to enter Fourth Epoch Trier alone... *Is Loki considered half-dead now?* When Zaratul fully controls his body, he should be completely dead. What a shame... Lumian regretted not finishing off Loki's final life himself, but didn't feel too disappointed or indignant.

He had already caused Loki's demise twice, after all!

After burning the letter, Lumian pondered for a moment, then left the bedroom. He sat across from Ludwig, who wore yellow cotton pajamas and a matching nightcap, watching the boy quickly nibble on a cold bone-in steak.

Ludwig stayed unfazed by Lumian's gaze, continuing his feast.

After nearly a minute, Lumian probed, "Are you willing to call me Godfather?"

Ludwig glanced up at him, then lowered his head, scooped up some banana puree, and spooned it into his mouth.

Lumian changed the question. "Are you willing to follow my orders, accept my commands, and build a tacit understanding here?"
This time, Ludwig didn't even look up, his mouth constantly moving.
Lumian silently watched as he slowly took something out of his Traveler's Bag.
It was a mercury eyeball in a glass jar—a Sequence 7 Lucky One Beyonder characteristic of the Monster pathway. It had re-condensed after the Flog boxing gloves shattered.
Ludwig immediately looked up.
Ignoring Ludwig's gaze, Lumian leisurely pulled out the Serial Killer Beyonder characteristic and a few other items, placing them on the dining table in front of him.
Then, he smiled at Ludwig, who wore the yellow cotton nightcap, and said, "Are you willing to call me Godfather?"
Ludwig fell silent for a few seconds before saying in a low voice, "Godfather."
Lumian probed further, "Are you willing to follow my orders, accept my commands, and build a tacit understanding here?"
Without hesitation, Ludwig replied, "I am."
As he spoke, his eyes were fixed on the pile of items before Lumian.
Sigh... Lumian sighed silently.
He could rely on "food" to control someone, but couldn't rely solely on "food." Otherwise, it'd be so easy for Ludwig to ignore him when there was no "food" around. This likely didn't meet an Iron-blooded Knight's ritual requirements.
Deep in thought, Lumian pointed at the pile and smiled.
"Since you've admitted to being my godson, you can choose one item.
"But there's a condition. You have to answer two or three of my questions."
Ludwig hesitated a moment, then spoke with a stern look, "Okay."
"Which one do you want?" Lumian asked kindly.
Looking around, Ludwig yearned for every item, but was reluctant to abandon any.
Finally overcoming himself, he pointed at the Serial Killer Beyonder characteristic and said, "That one!"
You really want that Beyonder characteristic... *Can it be turned into some magical dish or cocktail?* Lumian put away the other items and smiled at Ludwig.
"First question:
"What pathway does your Beyonder power belong to? What are its

characteristics? What's your rough Sequence level?"
He hoped to gain inspiration for taming the sealed Angel based on Ludwig's Beyonder pathway information.
Ludwig muttered under his breath, "That's three questions."
Lumian pretended not to hear.
Seeing his protests were futile, Ludwig could only pick up some beef and mutton to munch on. He mumbled, "Yes, yes..."
It seemed he couldn't recall the original name, so he had to find another term for it.
"It's the Gourmet pathway."
Lumian wasn't surprised at all. "No wonder you're always acting like you're savoring delicacies and ingredients."
Ludwig added earnestly, "To put it simply, it's a way to get superpowers by being hungry and eating.
"What corresponds to your Sequence 9 is Tramp. You lose everything and are always searching for food, barely surviving."
Could you be the ultimate Tramp embodiment? You'd even lost your mind, only never forgetting to eat... From that description, I can't tell what abilities a Tramp has... But Lumian didn't mock him.
Rather than detail the Tramp Sequence, Ludwig said, "Sequence 8 is Glutton."

"Glutton?" Lumian said approvingly, "Quite the image."

Ludwig ignored Lumian's mockery and continued with the brief introduction, "At this Sequence, hunger truly becomes ingrained in our bodies, allowing us to evolve around it."

"What kinds of evolutions are there?" Lumian was concerned that Ludwig would only mention this about Gluttons, just as he had described the Tramp Sequence. Therefore, he took the initiative to inquire.

Ludwig paused for a few seconds to swallow his food.

Then, he stuffed a small piece of lemon cake into his mouth and replied in a muffled manner, "Internal organs that are better suited for digesting food and absorbing energy. Stronger, more powerful teeth, a bite force and appetite that exceed normal limits...

"This will help us obtain different abilities from food more efficiently. We won't have to worry about being affected by the toxins, viruses, and bacteria that food brings."

"In other words, even if it's highly toxic, as long as you consume it with your mouth and treat it as food, you won't die from the poison?" Lumian suddenly felt that Ludwig would make a suitable assistant for Apothecaries.

Ludwig took a sip of milk and shook his head.

"We can't exceed a certain limit. Many Gluttons die from eating random stuff."

And you're not eating random stuff? Lumian scoffed inwardly.

At the same time, he inwardly sighed.

This guy is quite honest. He's indeed like a child most of the time. He actually forgot to protest that I had asked additional questions.

Ludwig set down the milk bottle and picked up a box of cookies.

Amidst the munching sounds, he continued, "The corresponding Sequence 7 is Gourmet.

"At this level, our digestion and eating abilities will improve further. We can discern which ingredients are edible, which are inedible, which ingredients can bring about special effects, and which ingredients need to be combined with others."

Lumian thought seriously before asking, "Is extracting the corresponding information from the consumed food one of a Gourmet's abilities?"

This ability had helped Lumian a great deal.

Ludwig, donning a thick yellow cotton nightcap, nodded obediently. "Yes."

He didn't elaborate on the corresponding abilities.

"Although a Gourmet is useful, I can sense that at this Sequence, you lack sufficient combat strength. Yes, perhaps Tramp will grant you a certain level of street fighting abilities," Lumian commented from his own perspective.
Ludwig didn't argue, nor did he bother to. How could delicacies already in his mouth or subsequent delicacies be less important than what he was talking about?
He peeled a lollipop and placed it in his mouth, a hint of enjoyment on his face.
"Beyond that is what you call Sequence 6—Chef."
"I thought it was Bartender," Lumian teased.
Ludwig pondered seriously and said, "Chefs cover a wider range. It's not like they can only make cocktails."
Lumian nodded pensively.
"Is a Chef's ability to use special ingredients to create mystical dishes, pastries, drinks, and cocktails?"
Ludwig had displayed this ability numerous times.
Ludwig couldn't help but reveal a smug expression.
"That's right. Every Chef has different characteristics and abilities due to the ingredients they've obtained and the food they've prepared.
"Chefs have one thing in common: they have excellent skills in processing ingredients. This includes finding weaknesses and techniques like cutting, chopping, and slicing."
Only at this Sequence would one from the Gourmet pathway truly possess combat strength...
However, a Chef is similar to a Contractee. Their actual combat strength depends on their synergy of abilities. The upper limit is very high, and the lower limit is very low... Lumian, thinking of a Contractee, asked curiously, "Is there a limit to the number of permanent effects a Chef can obtain through various mystical foods?"
As for the negative effects, Lumian, who had eaten Ice Lemon Fish fillet before, had a deep understanding.
Depending on the ingredients and finished products, mystical dishes or cocktails brought different negative effects, but they were significantly weaker than those a Contractee experienced.
"No." Ludwig quickly shook his head. "As long as you fully embrace hunger and greed, there won't be an upper limit."
This upper limit is a little crazy... However, this also means that there's no limit to the number of negative effects. Even if each one is far inferior to the ones brought about by a Contractee, they will undergo a qualitative change after stacking... Lumian pondered for a moment and looked at Ludwig, who had roughly finished his

meal.
"That first time we met, when I saw you chowing down on rats, were you just a Glutton or a Gourmet?"
Ludwig didn't try to hide anything.
"Gourmet."
Indeed, he'd been critiquing the dishes I served him.. Lumian pondered for a moment, then said, "Did you recover to Chef status during that Batings Black Insect incident?"
Ludwig curtly confirmed it.
"I was just short to begin with. Eating a Batings Black Insect was all it took to advance."
"What's the next Sequence?" Lumian steered the conversation back on track.
Ludwig dredged up the memories.
"It's Depriver."
"Depriver?" Lumian immediately thought of the Deprivation Bullet he'd gotten from Jebus.
Could this be a transaction from the cult of the Gourmet pathway?
Ludwig thought Lumian wanted him to explain the Depriver's abilities. He recounted, "A Depriver can strip one to three abilities from a target for a period of time. If they then consume part of the target's flesh, they permanently gain one of those abilities, and the target permanently loses it unless they drink a potion again or kill me—no, the corresponding Depriver.
"At Depriver, our recipes get way more range. A ton of formerly inedible things become food.
We can consume things we previously couldn't."
"Give me an example?" Lumian wasn't sure his interpretation matched Ludwig's intentions.
Ludwig looked at him and offered two examples.
"Corruption to a certain degree, as well as fireballs, lightning, and other energy forms."
They can eat way more dangerous stuff and consume things that shouldn't even be considered food... Lumian thought of an enemy he'd faced at the Hostel and something Ludwig just mentioned. He asked for confirmation, "So that ability to process ingredients includes those ingredients too?"
"Yes," Ludwig admitted candidly.
Lumian pulled the matte Deprivation Bullet from his Traveler's Bag and set it on the dining table.
"This is from a Depriver?"
Ludwig's eyes lit up.
"Yes."
He said anxiously, "Can I... can I use it as a prize? I don't want that

Beyonder characteristic anymore!"
"I think Beyonder characteristics are way more valuable," Lumian deliberately provoked him.
Ludwig looked sad and said reluctantly, "But I can only choose one.
"I can't actually consume Beyonder characteristics yet. I can only use them as ingredients for now." Is that right... Lumian eyed Ludwig and organized his thoughts.
"How much more do you need to eat to recover to Depriver?"
"The further along I go, the harder it gets. I can't just eat a ton. I need higher quality, higher energy foods." Ludwig pointed at the Deprivation Bullet. "I'd need at least 200 of these bullets to reach Depriver."
Lumian chuckled and whispered devilishly, "What if you ate the Depriver who made this bullet?"
"I could recover immediately!" Ludwig's eyes lit up.
Lumian's smile widened.
"You don't seem to have strong offensive abilities. I can help you get the stuff to capture the corresponding Beyonders, but you gotta listen to me and do what I say before I become a demigod. We need to be totally in sync.
"That's my promise. You gonna hold up your end of the deal?"
Ludwig hesitated a moment before reluctantly nodding.
"Deal."
Phew, stay calm... This is just the start of the "taming," not the end. Long process ahead...
Lumian suppressed his smile and asked curiously, "Who were you following back then?
"No need for the full title. Just call them something like 'the Great Mother."
Ludwig was caught off guard.
His expression shifted a few times before tears streamed down his face. He wailed like a child.
"I-l don't remember!
"I've forgotten. I've forgotten everything!"
Hearing his cries, Lugano emerged from the guest room in a thick coat.
The Doctor immediately noticed Lumian and asked in confusion, "Why is he crying?"
Is this really the terrifying cannibal from the Dream Festival?
Lumian chuckled in response.
"I showed him delicacies but didn't give him any."
"Alright..." Lugano looked between them in confusion before retreating back to his room.
Lugano's brief appearance made Lumian remember an item, and

he had a dangerous thought.
He pulled the remains of Omebella's umbilical cord from his Traveler's Bag and "consulted" Ludwig, who'd gradually stopped sobbing.
"What dishes and cocktails could you make with this?"
That umbilical cord left behind by the Great Mother's Child of God was thought to be just an ingredient for charms, mystical items, and Beyonder weapons. But now Lumian figured a Gourmet might see it differently.
Looking at Omebella's umbilical cord remains, Ludwig licked his lips.
"It could make three types of food with different mystical effects.
"One food would completely cure infertility."
"Don't need that," Lumian said in amusement. "What about the other two foods?"
Ludwig said professionally, "One grants potent self-healing abilities, though inferior to a Vampire's.
"And another..."

Chapter 741: "Appraisal"

"What else does it do?"

Lumian, seeing Ludwig pause as if he had concerns, pressed for an answer.

Ludwig stared at the piece of umbilical cord in front of Lumian and hesitated before replying, "It could somewhat alter your aura and lineage, making certain creatures without the necessary wisdom perceive you as a divine child of the 'Great Mother."

Lumian's expression grew more solemn.

"So, you're saying it could actually integrate the Child of God's lineage into mine, even if it's almost negligible?"

And this would fool creatures of low intelligence or those acting purely on instinct?

"Yes." Ludwig nodded earnestly. "That bit of lineage won't change anything for you, and only creatures directly created by the 'Great Mother' or those who have received Her boons could sense it."

This doesn't sound very useful, but in special circumstances, it could be incredibly crucial.

Compared to curing infertility or enhancing self-healing, it has more room for imagination...

Lumian weighed his words and asked, "What are the side effects?"

Could it change my gender? After all, the Great Mother's' Child of God, Omebella, seems to have been female.

Ludwig's greedy gaze shifted from the umbilical cord back to Lumian, and he said regretfully, "For someone else, it might cause the 'Great Mother's' Child of God to start developing inside them, but not for you. You just have to worry about the 'Great Mother' setting Her sights on you, really watching you."

Lumian was silent for a good twenty seconds before slowly stowing Omebella's umbilical cord remains back into his Traveler's Bag.

He wasn't in a hurry to have Ludwig use the remains to create food with special effects, planning instead to consult Madam Magician's opinion before deciding.

He was willing to take risks, but he wasn't reckless.

"Can I have it now?" Ludwig looked eagerly at the matte Deprivation Bullet.

"One last question." Lumian smiled again, pulling out another item from his Traveler's Bag.

It was a small glass vial containing ancient bloodstain powder.

This came from Demon Warlock Burman, who was guided by a visitor from Resurrection Island named Harrison. He summoned a spirit named Arden from the depths of death and easily killed it,

collecting its blood for a future ritual. Lumian got some of this bloodstain powder from his room.
Previously, Lumian had Franca conduct an investigation using Magic Mirror Divination, confirming that it truly came from the depths of the spirit world but yielded no further insights. Now, he wanted the Gourmet to taste it, to see if he could glean more important information.
He remembered clearly; the people of Resurrection Island claimed they could die and revive repeatedly, never aging, and the secret was in their control over the markings from the depths of death.
This might truly be a way to revive the dead.
"Is it edible?" Lumian maintained his smile as he pushed the glass vial with the ancient bloodstain powder towards Ludwig.
Ludwig carefully examined the powder for a while and then opened the bottle cap, touching it a few times with his fingers.
"Yes," he replied, not too eagerly.
"Then eat half of it." Lumian watched expectantly as Ludwig sprinkled a small amount of the ancient bloodstain powder into his mouth, leaving just a bit behind.
Ludwig chewed and tasted it for a while before starting his "gourmet review': "It has a rich aroma of death and eternal rest, originating from the depths of the spirit world.
"It comes from a man in his thirties, with traits of both the Mystery Pryer and Death pathways, in poor mental state, highly prone to emotional instability..."
Hearing this, Lumian raised an eyebrow.
This sounds like it's describing Demon Warlock Burman himself!
But this bloodstain powder is from the evil spirit Arden killed by Burman, right?
"From Intis's Winter Province?" Lumian confirmed his guess.
"Yes." Ludwig smacked his lips.
He shared other insights drawn from the bloodstain powder, each aligning with the Demon Warlock's situation.
This couldn't possibly mean that Burman summoned himself, killed himself, and then collected his own blood, could it? Lumian felt an eerie thrill.
The ancient bloodstain powder surely wasn't left by Burman due to some other issues, as both Franca and Ludwig had confirmed the blood was closely linked to death and the spirit world. Lumian had fought the Demon Warlock twice, believing him to still be alive at those times.
Using the method taught by Resurrection Island's Harrison, Burman summoned an evil spirit from the depths of death that was himself, er, his own marking?

He killed his own marking in the depths of death and found it very weak?
This is hard to believe...
What exactly does Harrison from Resurrection Island want, and what hidden truths lie behind the islanders' resurrections?
Lumian's thoughts raced, feeling that the mysteries of Resurrection Island were no less profound than the high-level events he had experienced before.
"Can you give it to me now?" Ludwig looked again at the Deprivation Bullet, very eagerly.
He handed back the small glass vial with the remaining bit of ancient bloodstain powder to Lumian.
"Yes." Lumian tossed the Deprivation Bullet to Ludwig.
Ludwig caught it, and stuffed the matte bullet into his mouth.
"Eating it directly?" Lumian asked with a chuckle, "Aren't you going to cook it first? Maybe mix a cocktail?"
Ludwig replied with a muffled voice, "No need for that, I can absorb it directly."
As he spoke, he sucked on the Deprivation Bullet like it was an ice pop, pulling it from his mouth again.
Compared to before, the bullet's matte metal casing had noticeably thinned, the intricate symbols etched into its surface now pitted and marked with teeth impressions.
Ludwig sucked on it three times, then finally, when the inside gunpowder was vaguely visible, he put the bullet in his mouth, chewed it with a crackling sound, and swallowed.
Lumian watched with a grimace, gaining a deeper understanding of the various changes hunger could bring.
After eating the Deprivation Bullet, Ludwig closed his eyes, savoring the taste and longing for more.
Lumian felt a pang of regret for the extraordinary bullet he had obtained from Jebus.
The Weakening Bullet, Deprivation Bullet, and Implosion Bullet had not served their intended purposes, while the Poison Bullet, Putrid Bullet, and Impregnating Bullet had been given to Franca.
"How do you feel?" Lumian inquired.
"Delicious, a familiar taste," Ludwig responded, half-closing his eyes.
After reflecting for a moment, he snapped his eyes open, their gaze sharp and alert.
"G-Godfather, can you quickly find out who made that bullet?"
You little rascal, that's the cult following your deity... But I can't blame you, you're brainless now.. And for an evil god, sacrificing any number of bestowed is worthwhile if it frees an angel from its

bonds, returning to an Angel's belly is like returning to the deity's heaven...
Lumian muttered silently to himself, nodded slightly in agreement, and slowly stood up, heading back to his bedroom.
Lying in bed, he stared at the dark ceiling adorned with a chandelier, feeling no trace of sleepiness despite the lingering scent of absinthe.
After staring silently for who knows how long, Lumian chuckled self-deprecatingly, trying to use Cogitation to help himself fall asleep.
He slowly visualized a crossed-out sphere that grew an eye in his mind.
His state settled, and drowsiness began to creep up.
Just then, Lumian was taken aback.
Cogitation was taught by his sister, and the Cogitation pattern was also casually drawn by her...
Lumian laughed softly to himself, his laughter shaking.
Minutes later, he indulged in reminiscing about his life in Cordu, including those interactions in the dream.
Even those, now looking back, carried a certain indescribable warmth.
As his thoughts wandered, Lumian remembered his sister's contracted creature, White Paper.
I wonder what state White Paper is in...
Strictly speaking, Aurore isn't completely dead, so her contract with White Paper should still exist...
Pity, contract creatures aren't messengers, only the contractee can summon them, otherwise, I'd summon White Paper to see its condition...
Using Aurore's words, seeing something left behind makes you think of that person? Or, liking someone so much you even like their pets?
Eh, it's not that I can't summon, since the Termiboros sealed inside me and I are one, Aurore's soul shard must be too, my summoning is as if Aurore is doing it... Thinking this, Lumian abruptly sat up.
In the darkness, he set up an altar and chanted the spell in the appropriate language: "I!
"I summon in my name: "The spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a friendly creature that can be subordinated, the weak ball that can telepathically connect with me..."
As the incantation echoed, the candlelight flickered gently, but nothing happened.
With Spirit Vision active, Lumian didn't see White Paper that had appeared in his dreams.

Sigh... He lay back down, disappointed.
As time ticked by, the sleepless Lumian suddenly became alert, feeling not the slightest fatigue.
It was six in the morning.
Lumian got up silently and began to clean up the altar.
Just then, a "doll" messenger in a light-gold dress emerged from the void, dropping a dark coin pouch and a folded square letter onto the table.
Is this the reward from Miss Magician? One of them is a Traveler's Bag? Lumian perked up, grabbing the dark coin pouch.
The "doll" messenger glanced at him, pinched her nose and said, "Drunkard! Your clothes stink!"
Uh... Lumian, who hadn't bathed or changed clothes last night, cleared his throat awkwardly in embarrassment and thanked her.
After the "doll" messenger left, he continued to check the rewards.

Chapter 742: Rewards

That dark coin pouch was indeed a Traveler's Bag, containing three items: One was a sheepskin parchment of a brownish hue, another was a nearly invisible triangular spike, and the last was a mechanically intricate black revolver.

Lumian didn't rush to take out the rewards but instead unfolded the folded square letter.

"Prize Descriptions: "Ironblood Knight potion formula: See for yourself.

"Traveler's Bag: No need for further introduction, right?

'Wintry Blade: A mystical item crafted from the dust of ancient vengeful spirits and residual spirituality.

"Any creature pierced by it, even without a visible wound, will fall into an icy rigidity and uncontrollable thoughts, as if possessed by a Wraith.

"Moreover, as the battle persists, the targets of the Wintry Blade, even without direct contact, will gradually find their thoughts slowing and movements becoming stiff and awkward.

"The downside is that the bearer gradually loses body heat, turning toward a necrotic state.

If this exceeds the necessary time limit, the process becomes irreversible.

"Placing it in the Traveler's Bag effectively avoids the negative effects of carrying it. You only need to ensure the battle doesn't exceed three hours. Of course, as a Sequence 5 of the Hunter pathway, a burning Reaper, you could endure the negative effects for at least four hours without other countermeasures."

Reading this, Lumian immediately thought of the Eggers family's golden mask.

That mask could also turn the wearer into a dead being, providing protection for the spirit and consciousness to remain alive until the mask was removed, allowing the wearer to easily revert to their original state.

While wearing Death's golden mask, could I use the Wintry Blade completely unaffected?

I'm already an undead, so the gradual necrosis doesn't apply... No, wearing that golden mask for too long means real death once removed, resulting in instant death... Lumian found no exploitable loophole and sighed in disappointment.

He continued reading the last part of the letter: "Winter is Coming: This revolver was found at the site of a secret but failed ritual while investigating the Order of All Extinction cult. It was meant to be a collectible firearm, but it became a formidable weapon with a

limited number of uses due to corruption during the ritual.
"The bullets it fires carry that corruption, producing two effects:
"One ensures the bullet hits its target; even Saints, unless they use special abilities to dodge, will be hit. For beings below demigods, unless they switch with a substitute or the shooter is under an illusion and unable to aim, the shot will hit its intended target, and any substitutes will fail.
"Two, ensures death; even Saints, lacking certain traits and abilities, once hit, will suffer great trauma and gradually die. For beings below demigods, a hit means certain death.
"These two effects cannot coexist; a choice is made for each shot.
"The number of times it can still carry these effects is four. Once used up, Winter is Coming will revert to a normal revolver and begin rusting and deteriorating. However, until then, its normal shots will also spread ailments with each wound, with the type of disease being unpredictable.
"After each use of Winter is Coming, you must seek treatment from an Apothecary or Doctor within the following week, even if no symptoms appear.
"If not treated in time, you will inevitably contract a terminal illness that lower-sequence Apothecaries and Doctors cannot cure due to mystical factors."
This is a weapon that can harm demigods...? After the Overseer Perle's painted self incident, are Miss Magician and her peers consciously providing us with items that can affect demigods, with bearable side effects? Doctor... Lumian half-turned his body, casting his gaze toward the door.
Lugano had already woken up and was preparing Ludwig's first breakfast.
After confirming the rewards, Lumian reached into the Traveler's Bag and pulled out the brownish sheepskin parchment, written on in dark red ink:
"Potion name: Iron-blooded Knight; "Sequence: 4;
"Main ingredient: Magma Giant's core, Stone of Catastrophe;
"Supplementary ingredients: 80 milliliters of boiling magma, 20 grams of flora powder corrupted by a Stone of Catastrophe, 20 grams of soil soaked in soldier's blood from a large battlefield, one acorn; "Ritual: Form a team of at least 30 people, cultivate deep comradeship with them, allowing them to grow stronger together with perfect synergy, understanding the leader's intent through eye contact and gestures, nearly as one entity, then have them perform the ritual (the stronger and more cohesive the team, the better the ritual's effect)."
While reading, Lumian felt a strong burning sensation from the

dark red inked words and thought he could smell rust and blood.
Phew... Lumian had just finished reading the Iron-blooded Knight potion formula and quickly set it down on the table, feeling as if he was sinking into a hell of flames and blood.
Such a strong mental impact...
Is it because the Sequence 4 potion formula inherently possesses such traits, or because it was written by an Angel, or perhaps a combination of both?
Boiling magma... Does this mean drinking magma directly, and if you don't advance, you die?
Lumian memorized the Iron-blooded Knight potion formula in his mind, occasionally opening the parchment to ensure there were no mistakes.
...
In the morning, at 702 Apartment, 9 Rue Orosai.
Lumian placed the new Traveler's Bag and the two weapons on the coffee table and went into detail about the latter two.
"Only three items?" Franca asked, puzzled.
Lumian chuckled.
"There's also the Iron-blooded Knight Sequence 4 potion formula for the Hunter pathway, but that's meaningless for you."
"Who says so? At Sequence 4, a Demoness can switch to the Hunter pathway!" Franca retorted, her eyes sparkling.
She almost said that before joining the Demoness Sect, her dream was to obtain the Iron-blooded Knight potion formula to turn herself back into a male.
Before Lumian could respond, Franca eagerly pleaded, "May I see it? It's not like you'll lose anything" This way, if I become a Demoness of Affliction and something forces me out of the Demoness Sect, I could consider advancing to Iron-blooded Knight!
"Sure." Lumian replied nonchalantly.
He knew what Franca truly desired.
He then took the brownish parchment out of his Traveler's Bag.
Seeing this, Jenna asked, curious yet hopeful, "May I have a look too?"
This was a potion formula that could unlock the gates of godhood!
"Uh..." Franca turned to Jenna, wanting to stop her but finding no suitable excuse.
Is it really appropriate for a female Demoness to look at the Iron-blooded Knight potion formula?
Lumian didn't help Franca dissuade Jenna, and freely unfolded the brown parchment, placing it on the coffee table surface, and casually cautioned, "For every paragraph, take a look then close your eyes and rest for a few seconds—it has a strong mental

impact."
After a while, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony felt as though they had been roasted by a fire all night long, their sweat long since dried.
"It requires at least thirty people... That's a bit difficult," Franca said, empathizing with Lumian's challenge.
Lumian chuckled.
The stronger the team members, the better the effect. And if you have members with godhood in the team, the number required can be significantly reduced."
Franca and Jenna thought of a name simultaneously and said in unison, "Ludwig?"
"I'm trying to teach him." Lumian gave a godfatherly smile.
Franca said no more and turned her attention to the three items: the Wintry Blade, Winter is Coming, and the Traveler's Bag.
She generously smiled and said, "Jenna, Anthony, you pick first. Just don't leave the Traveler's Bag for me—I already have one."
She was worried about lacking a powerful or special effect item. Both the Wintry Blade and Winter is Coming perfectly met her needs—any would do. As an Assassin, her hidden blade was a normal weapon that could rely on Witch powers to attach black flames, while the Cannon Gun was akin to a portable mini-cannon, nothing special.
Anthony immediately looked at Jenna, signaling her to choose first.
This was not out of courtesy—he wanted the Traveler's Bag, and he wanted the other two items as well.
Jenna looked at the Hypnotist, lacking direct attack capability, then at Franca, whose gaze moved back and forth between the Wintry Blade and Winter is Coming. She picked up the ark coin pouch and said with a smile, "I've always wanted a Traveler's Bag."
This wasn't a lie—many Witch spells required casting materials, and some items, even just by carrying them, could have negative effects, which could be barely avoided by placing them in the Traveler's Bag, such as the Beyonder characteristic of the Dream Stealer.
Once Jenna took the Traveler's Bag, Anthony quickly made his decision.
"I'll take Winter is Coming."
Without a Traveler's Bag, carrying the Wintry Blade would be a significant burden.
Franca looked at the nearly transparent triangular spike and smiled broadly.
"I'll see if I can have it made into a hidden blade."
These are all suitable rewards for us. Madam Judgment and

company are so thoughtful...
Lumian watched his companions distribute the rewards, nodding thoughtfully.
That evening, back in the rented apartment, he met Madam Magician again.
This Major Arcana card holder spoke bluntly, "Head to the Blue Avenger now."

Chapter 743: Exploration

On the dark expanse of the sea, the antiquated Blue Avenger bobbed gently with the undulations of the waves, enveloped by an unending mist.

Lumian once again came face to face with Alger, the Stormbringer.

The bearer of The Hanged Man card stood on deck, his deep blue hair a wild mess, seemingly under constant assault from the sea winds. His attire had changed from his previous sailor's garb to a captain's coat adorned with golden embroidery on a blue background.

"Explore it yourself," Alger said to Lumian, who was standing beside Magician, nodding firmly.

"I don't have any wisdom to impart that would help; if I did, I'd have already uncovered all the secrets of this ghost ship."

These matters had been confirmed by Madam Magician, leaving Lumian without doubts. He

thanked Alger and began walking forward, his steps echoing on the wooden deck.

He triggered the residual aura of the Blood Emperor in his right palm without hesitation, but felt no ominous sensation spill forth.

Instead, his palm felt ice-cold, while deep within was a pain like fire scorching his flesh.

Lumian lifted his right hand and noticed that the faint red scar had brightened slightly, but the skin covering it had turned paler, more deathlike.

I wonder whether the Underworld Daoist's seal would prevent activating the key special characteristics of this ghost ship... Lumian circled the Blue Avenger's cabin with a mix of anxiety and trepidation.

During his exploration, he encountered no attacks from ropes or any other disturbances.

It seems the residual aura of the Blood Emperor still serves some purpose, or else it wouldn't be this tranquil... Lumian muttered to himself as he stepped into the cabin, exploring each room in turn.

The Hanged Man, Alger, did not follow but stayed at the front of the deck, watching from afar.

As Lumian's figure disappeared deeper into the ship, Magician raised her right hand and drew a circle in mid-air with her index finger.

A sprinkle of brilliant starlight emerged, initially forming a transparent crystal orb, then expanding into a circular, dreamlike veil.

On the veil, Lumian's figure appeared, wandering around the

captain's cabin, occasionally extending his right palm to touch various objects.
"There should be some findings," Magician stated with a charlatan-like tone.
The Hanged Man nodded slightly, not asking what might be found or what changes it could bring, since even Magician could not divine a certain future, and Ma'am Hermit could only see vague images.
After Mr. Fool's slumber, the Major Arcana card holders had explored the Blue Avenger multiple times but had not unraveled the ghost ship's core secrets or located the treasures left by the Tudor dynasty.
With the Apprentice pathway's speciality, Magician only managed to help The Hanged Man uncover other secrets, unable to reach the deepest level.
Mr. Star's explanation was:
"The Blue Avenger is not only influenced by the Lawyer pathway's Distortion authority but also possesses notable traits of errors, spatial transposition, and grafting.
And this aligned with the actual circumstances of the Tudor dynasty: Under Blood Emperor Alista Tudor, among the five great nobles, Amon was the Marauder, the King of Angels of the Error pathway, later becoming a true god; the ancestor of the Abraham family, Mr. Door, was the King of Angels of the Apprentice pathway; and the ancestor of the Antigonus family was the King of Angels of the Seer pathway. The Jacob and Tamara families had one Angel from the Error pathway and one who had been an Angel of the Apprentice pathway.
They clearly possessed strong abilities to utilize errors, alter positions, and graft spaces.
If not ensuring the preservation of the Blue Avenger and its treasures unharmed and intact, Magician felt she could unravel the ghost ship's deepest secrets, but doing so would reduce the Blue Avenger to irreparable fragments.
Under the watchful eyes of two Major Arcana card holders, Lumian searched every room on the upper deck without triggering any anomalies.
He intermittently came across seven or eight sailors, all instructed by the captain not to interfere with his exploration.
Approaching the stairs leading to the lower decks, Lumian glanced down into the pitch-black abyss below, maintaining the stimulated aura of the Blood Emperor as he descended the creaking stairs.
As he walked, he suddenly detected an unusual scent.

He had been descending for thirty to forty seconds, which under normal circumstances should have brought him to the lower deck's floor.
The distance between the Blue Avenger's upper and lower decks couldn't possibly be so vast that a Reaper couldn't traverse it in dozens of seconds!
To this, Lumian responded not with alarm, but with elation.
An anomaly was exactly what he needed!
Had there been no anomaly, it would have meant the sealed residual aura of the Blood Emperor could no longer function properly!
Lumian exhaled, calming his nerves while maintaining a steady but unhurried pace, continuing the creaky descent into the darkness.
After an indeterminate amount of time, he saw no more wooden steps ahead; his feet now touched cold, black stone slabs radiating a metallic chill.
Have I arrived? Just as this thought flickered through Lumian's mind, his vision was flooded with blazing white light.
He saw a barrage of white-hot flame spears flying densely toward him, obscuring everything above.
It was like facing an army, each soldier hurling a flame spear from their hands.
There was nowhere to hide, no way to dodge.
Instinctively, Lumian was about to swap places with his shadow, hoping to use this rapid ability to survive the initial volley and then seek a chance to teleport away.
But just then, he had an idea—an extremely daring idea.
Lumian's expression took on a tinge of madness as he faced the overwhelming barrage of flame spears, not using any abilities and not even attempting to dodge.
He straightened his back and thrust forward his right palm.
The right palm, sealed by the Underworld Daoist and carrying the residual aura of the Blood Emperor—both were fully activated.
The dense, rain-like barrage of white-hot flame spears instantly froze in mid-air.
They stopped, neither advancing nor falling.
Seeing this, Lumian let out an uncontrollable sigh of relief.
He had made the right bet!
Gradually, the white-hot flame spears began to extinguish, slowly fading until they completely disappeared.
Before Lumian could take a closer look, clusters of bright flames lit up on both sides.
They resembled wall-mounted lamps, piercing the dense darkness

and revealing the surroundings.
He found himself in a deep, wide hall that was smaller than he had imagined.
When the white-hot flame spears were hurled at him like a flock of endless crows, it felt as though he stood on an ancient battlefield, vast enough to be measured in kilometers. However, the hall before him was merely the size of the grand prayer hall of the Saint Vive Cathedral.
At a glance, Lumian's gaze froze, and his heart seemed to stop beating.
At the far end of the hall, there stood a colossal throne made of black iron.
The surface of the throne bore patches of red, either from the corrosion of ages or from old bloodstains.
There was a figure on the throne!
This figure was giant-like, draped in a deep red ceremonial robe and wearing an iron-black crown, with its right elbow resting on the armrest, supporting its bowed head.
The flickering blood-red long hair draped down, hiding the figure's face.
Lumian was familiar with this figure; he had seen it at the Samaritan Women's Spring, though the attire was somewhat different now.
It was the figure of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor!
However, this figure lacked the terror, violence, and madness seen at the Samaritan Women's Spring, devoid of the aura of war and destruction, and the tangible oppressiveness and sense of conquest; if it weren't visible, Lumian would have believed there was nothing on the iron throne.
A phantom? Lumian closed his eyes, relying solely on his other senses and intuition to feel.
In this perception, there was nothing above the iron throne marked with red stains.
Lumian's heartbeat gradually normalized, and he reopened his eyes to look at the iron throne.
The figure remained motionless.
Lumian resisted the urge to observe any weaknesses in the figure or to activate the Eye of Calamity. Instead, he shifted his gaze and surveyed the rest of the hall.
Below the nine steps leading up to the iron throne were five mottled stone chairs—two on the left and three on the right.
Why couldn't there be one more, for symmetry? Lumian couldn't help but criticize to himself.
He knew these five stone chairs likely represented the five great

nobles of the Tudor dynasty.
These ancient, mottled chairs appeared smashed by someone; some were completely split by cracks, some shattered into countless pieces yet barely holding their original shape, some had broken backrests, some were missing their seats, and others seemed melted by intense flames as if burnt for a long time.
Had there been a battle here? Lumian tried to find corresponding marks on the black stone floor, the giant supporting columns, and the surrounding walls, but found nothing.
No objects either... Weren't there supposed to be treasures from the Tudor dynasty hidden here? Had they been stolen? Hmm, Termiboros had said earlier that if I'm not of high enough level, forcibly exploring the Blue Avenger could lead to the resurrection of Alista Tudor within me... This suggests there should be something here, or some arrangement... Lumian started walking forward again.
All the while, he kept his eyes on the figure on the iron throne, observing every detail.
Suddenly, he saw a pair of eyes, iron-black and cold.
The figure on the iron throne slowly raised its head.

Chapter 744: Approach

The moment Lumian saw those iron-black eyes, his mind went completely blank.

When he came to, he was shocked to find himself walking step by step toward the massive iron throne without any intention to do so.

He could feel his body trembling uncontrollably, yet he was powerless to stop his legs from moving.

It seemed as though his body was no longer his own, obeying unknown commands and directed by someone else!

This scene, coupled with the figure on the iron throne possibly being Blood Emperor Alista Tudor, instantly reminded Lumian of two past incidents: One was at the Samaritan Women's Spring, where both he and Hela lost consciousness due to the violent reactions of the Blood Emperor's apparition, walking back to the edge of the spring as if they were puppets being manipulated or soldiers absolutely obeying orders.

The other was in the depths of the Red Swan Castle's underground labyrinth, where he, Albus, and Elros lost consciousness after hearing a phantom roar from Vermonda Sauron in Fourth Epoch Trier, and they all wandered away from the core area, each towards a different wax sculptors.

Could this be a similar situation now? Is this a capability at the Hunter's angelic level? Lumian forced himself to calm down to find a way out of his current predicament.

Compared to those two times, at least his consciousness recovered quickly this time!

Right, why did my consciousness awaken first this time, while my body still accepts control?

Is the figure of Alista Tudor here weaker and less powerful, or is there another reason?

Perhaps this anomaly holds the key to overcoming the control.

Lumian strained to extend his will towards his limbs, trying to regain control over them.

This had some effect; his steps toward the iron throne began to slow.

He also took the opportunity to get a clearer look at the figure of Alista Tudor on the throne: The Blood Emperor had a stern face with sharp, chiseled features, resolute lips, a prominent nose, and long hair gleaming with a faint blood-light, his iron-black eyes cold yet filled with ultimate madness.

Suddenly, Lumian felt an urge to submit, to give up resistance.

This impulse did not fade quickly but instead swelled rapidly,

filling his mind.
No, I can't resist...
There's no way to resist...
Submit, submission will grant everything...
If He becomes angry, I will be destroyed, and Franca and Jenna will also be destroyed...
Give up, give up, kneel down and beg for forgiveness, accept the command...
Such thoughts surged in Lumian's mind, turning into violent waves that battered his clarity, rationality, and will.
He clenched his teeth, as if any relaxation would break the final dam, and the food would completely drown his will and soul.
His previously slowed steps quickened again.
On the deck of the Blue Avenger.
Magician and The Hanged Man were both staring at the dreamlike veil suspended in midair.
Against a backdrop of starlight, Lumian's figure on the translucent curtain had already become blurred, the surrounding darkness rendering everything else invisible.
This obscurity compared to the previous clarity indicated that something unusual was happening.
The eyes of Magician and The Hanged Man saw Lumian's body growing increasingly rigid, yet his pace quickening.
They also noticed his black hair slowly lengthening, tinted with a blood-like glow.
"Something's off," The Hanged Man Alger, said, turning to Madam Magician beside him.
Magician nodded slightly, preparing to pull out a Sealed Artifact.
This would help her precisely locate Lumian and allow her direct entry into the hidden extradimensional space.
In the dim surroundings, Lumian walked forward with a blank, rigid expression.
Yet his soul was struggling, crying out in pain:
I can't give up...
J mustn't give up...
If1 lose my resolve, I will no longer be myself...
Dogsh*t...
Son of a sow...
...
Lumian exerted all his strength, but felt an increasing desire to submit.
Suddenly, the dam holding his will collapsed, and surrender and submission completely overtook him.
Lumian's mind went blank again.

In this state, he had no concept of how much time had passed, until a deathly cold and rot-like pain shot through his right palm.
Death... cold...
Rot... pain...
Pain...
Lumian was jolted awake, suddenly regaining his thoughts and a measure of control over his body.
Before him was not the nine-stepped dais or the huge iron throne marked with red, but a mirror.
An antique full-length mirror, framed with elaborate silver designs!
The mirror reflected Lumian's figure.
In the mirror, Lumian saw his face contorted with pain, looking like he might give up at any moment, while his facial contours slowly sharpened and his nose became unnaturally prominent.
At the same time, his black hair grew inch by inch, dyed with a bloody glow, and his blue eyes turned colder, edging toward iron-black.
Jam turning into Alista Tudor...
This realization dawned on Lumian.
Without thinking further, while his body still somewhat obeyed his commands, he immediately lunged to the side, trying to escape the reflection of the silver mirror.
A dive followed by a roll quickly took him out of the mirror's reflective range.
The next second, he heard a phantom roar, a mad scream.
His mind blanked out again.
As his thoughts gradually returned, he found himself still crouched on the ground, the endpoint of his roll.
His body hadn't moved toward the mirror on its own, but it couldn't stop shaking, as if his blood had frozen.
Bang! Bang! Bang!
It seemed as if something inside the mirror was madly pounding, making the mirror clatter as if it were about to shatter and release a monster.
And with each bang against the mirror, Lumian's mind felt the impact, over and over.
This gripped him with fear, nearly solidifying his thoughts.
After a while, the pounding inside the mirror gradually subsided, and the surroundings became eerily quiet.
Lumian's body stopped shaking, and he began to understand and reflect on his current situation and recent ordeal: If had really approached that full-length mirror, and the reflection had completed the transformation, would that mean that Blood

Emperor Alista Tudor would be resurrected within me?
But as long as I'm not reflected in that mirror, and my image isn't cast upon it, the impact will be minimal, and neither my will nor my body will lose command...
Is the trigger for this transformation entering the range of the full-length mirror's reflection?
It seems calm now...
Lumian slowly supported himself up, cautiously observing his surroundings.
He realized he was not in a somber hall, but in a bizarre starlight-formed space where the floor appeared semi-transparent, revealing endless darkness below, and no dome above, only twinkling yet ethereal stars.
On either side were doors of starlight, erect in the darkness, forming a wide, somber corridor that ended with the silver full-body mirror.
At this moment, Lumian had reached deep into this corridor, only about fifteen meters from the mirror.
Was the hall I saw earlier, the stone chair, the iron throne, and the figure of the Blood Emperor all illusions?
Was their purpose to make me submit?
No, if I had been reflected in the mirror, the one emitting the roar I just heard would have achieved their goal...
In a flash of insight, Lumian guessed: Perhaps, the illusions I saw earlier—the iron throne, the figure of Tudor, the broken stone chair— were resonances caused by the residual aura of the Blood Emperor within me and that silver full-length mirror, which also triggered a response trom the Underworld Daoist's brand, helping me briefly escape the controlled state and the mirror's reflective range.
Thinking this, Lumian raised his right hand, looking at his palm.
There, the pale red scar was vibrant as if just entered into his body, while the pale skin around it showed clear signs of decay, leaking a pale yellow fluid, and revealing the bones beneath.
This preliminary confirmed Lumian's suspicion.
He once again turned his gaze toward the silver full-length mirror facing him.
Having dealt with the Mirror People multiple times, he slightly furrowed his brows: Does the Blood Emperor want to use that mirror and His residual aura within me for resurrection?
There must be something hidden inside that mirror.
The Blood Emperor's s resurrection setup actually involves the mirror world...
Yeah, that's not unusual, whether it's the special mirror world

itself or the Mirror People from that world, they are all related to this Blood Emperor's Fourth Epoch Trier...
I had thought the special mirror world was a relic of the War of the Four Emperors, but Moran Avigny from the Tamara family said their connection to the special mirror world was established before the War of the Four Emperors...
Dammit, that special mirror world couldn't have been created by the Blood Emperor, could it?
How many problems has He left for this world?
As expected of the Blood Emperor known for His madness...
But clearly, the special mirror world can't avoid the Primordial Demoness...
Could it be that the Demoness Sect secretly lured the Tamara family, trying to subtly influence the Blood Emperor through the special mirror world?
In the end, it was used by the Blood Emperor?
Fourth Epoch Trier is indeed full of mysteries...
As Lumian pondered, he suddenly understood why Termiboros had initially prevented him from exploring the Blue Avenger.
To explore here, one would need either the Underworld Daoist's brand to seal the Blood Emperor's residual essence or some corresponding artifact or authority to counteract that domination; otherwise, one would become a puppet of Alista Tudor, allowing Him to resurrect within.
For Termiboros, this was definitely not a good thing.
Lumian's gaze shifted, focusing on the doors of starlight.
Did they represent different treasures?

Chapter 745: Three Items

Having checked his physical condition, Lumian slowly moved along the wall of the spacious corridor.

During this, he almost cleared his mind, not thinking or analyzing, focusing solely on whether he would be caught by the silver full-length mirror at the end of the deep corridor.

Finally, following his instincts, Lumian stopped.

He hoped to use the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence and a Fate Appropriator's sensitivity to fate to find the most "suitable" room among the doors of starlight.

There might be high-level items from the Hunter's path there, even the main ingredient for the Iron-blooded Knight potion!

Looking at the translucent door formed by brilliant starlight beside him, Lumian, in a hushed tone, asked, "Termiboros, do you think there's great danger inside?"

After the ordeal with the School of Truth, Lumian grew more cautious and vigilant towards the Angel of Inevitability, but that didn't mean he wouldn't seek His opinion under the right circumstances and conditions, as Termiboros could still offer valuable advice.

As it was now, with Madam Magician outside, Termiboros had little hope of breaking His seal; his death or mutation would only worsen His situation, likely prompting Him to warn of any danger.

Lumian couldn't see changes in his own fate, but Termiboros could!

Termiboros remained silent, not answering Lumian's question.

Unfazed, Lumian placed his right hand, still pulsing with the Blood Emperor's residual essence, on the handle of the starlight door before him.

He slowly turned the handle, poised to push the door open, waiting for any reaction from Termiboros.

The door of starlight gradually opened, and Termiboros gave no warning.

No response is also a response! It means the danger inside is bearable, or likely manageable...

Lumian calmly pushed the door wide open and walked into the room dominated by shadows.

Suddenly, a bluish-white blaze lit up, and an iron-black sword engulfed in terrifying flames struck down towards his head.

Prepared for such surprises, Lumian quickly activated the black mark on his shoulder and teleported to the side of the room.

Bang!

The black sword, covered in bluish-white flames, struck the

translucent starlight floor, leaving a deep crack.
Inside the crack, some of the starlight melted, appearing like flowing magma.
Using the sparks, Lumian saw who his assailant was.
It was a nearly 2.5-meter tall suit of iron-black armor, the interior of its visor a swath of darkness, as if uninhabited, with no fiery glow of an undead's eyes.
With a swift motion, the iron-black armor turned and faced Lumian, raising the large sword covered in bluish-white flames once more.
Before it could strike, Lumian's blue eyes had turned iron-black.
He spotted the weak points in the half-giant armor, the pale-white spots at its joints.
As the black sword struck with its fiery blade, Lumian teleported away again.
With a bang, the bluish-white flames scattered, and Lumian's figure outlined behind the iron-black armor.
He leaped up, his right fist igniting with white flames.
A resounding clang echoed as Lumian punched the joint between the helmet and body armor of the iron-black armor.
Cull!
After landing the punch, Lumian immediately teleported away, dodging a waist-high slash from the half-turned iron-black armor.
In this manner, using the high mobility of teleport, he continuously appeared behind his target, striking the same spot with Cull, never overreaching, completing a single hit with each teleport.
Clang! Clang! Clang!
After five consecutive Culls, the iron-black armor stood frozen in place.
Gnarly cracks spread rapidly from the joint between its helmet and body armor, soon covering its entire body.
Crack!
The iron-black armor completely shattered, its metal fragments falling like rain onto the starlight-condensed floor, making a pattering sound.
Clang. The large sword covered in bluish-white flames followed, hitting the ground.
It has no intelligence, moves stiffly, and is stronger than a Sequence 6 but weaker than a Sequence 5. However, that sword hits incredibly hard. If it struck me, unless I substituted with an animated shadow, I would've been killed instantly or lost limbs. That's only because it didn't hit my torso. And yes, it's very durable, even more so than the Guardians I encountered at the Dream

Festival, Lumian mused, glancing at the shattered armor while using the remaining light from the black sword to scan the room for other dangers.
The room was quite empty, featuring only an altar-like stone platform with a small, transparent glass bottle on it, containing a semi-solid yellowish-red substance, topped with a thick black wick.
A mystical candle? Lumian speculated roughly. I wonder what it's used for...
By now, he was fairly certain there were no other surprises, and he turned his attention back to the pile of fragments from the shattered iron-black armor.
Among the debris, he found a peculiar piece of leather.
The leather was about the size of half a towel, creamy white, and finely textured, appearing so enticing that even from a distance, Lumian felt it must have belonged to a beautiful woman.
Human skin? he muttered, frowning as he approached.
He didn't immediately pick up the black sword, whose flames had mostly died down, or the alluring piece of leather. Instead, he drew a dagger from his Traveler's Bag.
Using the dagger, Lumian picked out the leather, holding it up before him.
The first thing he saw was a few words in ancient Hermes script:
"Despair...
"Sequence 4..."
Suddenly, Lumian's breathing grew belabored, his head spun, and his physical condition visibly worsened.
He quickly looked away and used the dagger to lift the delicate white leather, stuffing it into his Traveler's Bag.
His discomfort gradually subsided.
A potion formula for the Demoness of Despair? Lumian mused over what he had just seen.
And the leather it's written on was peeled right off a Demoness of Despair, hence its special and dangerous nature? Truly a relic from the Tudor dynasty, harboring such items...
Lost in thought, Lumian's gaze shifted to the black sword, whose bluish-white flame was dimming, no longer as brilliant as before.
He pondered for a moment, deciding not to risk determining the item's abilities, effects, and negative impacts just yet. Instead, he placed it into the Traveler's Bag, setting it aside in a corner clear of other items.
Using the same method, Lumian also packed the strange candle in the glass bottle into the Traveler's Bag.
He planned to consult Madam Magician about these items once

outside, rather than experimenting on his own!
After ensuring the room had nothing else of interest, Lumian returned through the door of starlight to the deep, spacious corridor.
Just as he was about to continue using the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence and a Fate Appropriator's sensitivity to fate to choose the next room to explore, a faint, distant voice suddenly echoed in his ears: "For you, the other rooms are too dangerous..."
This was the voice of Madam Magician.
Mr. Hanged Man and her are indeed watching... Did her words mean that the exploration is to pause here? This confirmation steadied Lumian considerably.
He thought for a few seconds, deciding to do one more thing before leaving this extradimensional space.
Slowly, bit by bit, he circled towards the silver full-length mirror at the end of the corridor, his focus intense, ready to turn and leave at the first word of discouragement from Madam Magician.
Until he reached the side of the silver full-length mirror, Madam Magician had not spoken out to stop him.
Lumian took a deep breath and carefully moved his right palm towards the front of the silver full-length mirror.
He didn't know whether the mirror would react again when reflecting only a palm.
As his palm moved slowly, Lumian's nerves were taut.
Finally, he touched the surface of the mirror, feeling its brittle yet firm coldness.
Immediately after, Lumian activated a power from his contract with Bloody Jack—Mirror Markl He wanted to test whether he could still sense the mark left in this hidden space once he returned to the outside world.
Blood seeped from his palm into the mirror, forming an inverted image.
While waiting, Lumian suddenly had a thought: Did my recent encounters stack on negative effects from the Mirror Mark contract? This does indeed pertain to mirror-related anomalies and bizarre dangers...
In the blink of an eye, Lumian had set the Mirror Mark.
Having done this, he began to retrace his steps, avoiding areas where the silver full-length mirror could reflect him, and walked up the wooden stairs.
Before long, Lumian's path brightened as he saw the wall lamps on either side of the ship's cabin and the dim firelight.
He had returned to the Blue Avenger.

Upon reaching the front deck, before Lumian could ask Madam Magician to retrieve the three items from his Traveler's Bag and perform their appraisal, he heard the Major Arcana card holder chuckle and say, "As expected of a Hunter with the status of a fake Angel and Tudor's remnant aura. You obtained three items closely related to Hunters and Demonesses in an instant.
"That sword is what you were hoping for—it's made from the Iron-blooded Knight Beyonder characteristic."

Chapter 746: Corpse Wax Candle

A mystical item made from an Iron-blooded Knight Beyonder characteristic? The Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence sure is handy... A Fate Appropriator's sensitivity to fate must have contributed a bit... Or, could it be the result of some arrangement?
Lumian was first surprised, then felt the aftereffects of a traumatic bestowment.
Madam Magician seemed to sense his thoughts and chuckled, saying, "I don't know if this is a bestowment from fate, but even if it is, it's the kind we were hoping for and can certainly accept."
Lumian silently nodded.
Mr. Hanged Man, speaking calmly, said, "Don't overcomplicate your thoughts, just consider two things: "First, you now have no ability to escape this arrangement. Sometimes, what you think of as resistance or rebellion might actually be a predetermined part of the process, and Mr. Fool's Angels aren't always available to protect you. Remember, accepting reality isn't a sign of weakness; finding opportunities within such realities is a true act of courage.
"Second, maximize the benefits that this bestowment of fate brings. Work hard to improve yourself. This doesn't mean giving up but rather tests your wisdom and determination.
When you sense danger or anything unusual, remember, we will always stand by you.
Remember, Mr. Fool can interfere with those plans, but as you know, He isn't fully awake and can't frequently provide protection —only at critical moments."
After listening intently, Lumian slowly nodded, finding a different kind of resonance and persuasiveness in hearing these ideas voiced by someone else.
Mr. Hanged Man thought for a moment, then added, "What you need to be most wary of is the attempt to resurrect the Blood Emperor through you. You must be extra cautious in similar situations going forward."
"I'll remember that, thank you, Mr. Hanged Man," Lumian replied sincerely.
Madam Magician then steered the conversation back on track.
"You can take out the items you've gathered, and I'll help you evaluate their powers and any negative effects."
With the promise of support, Lumian reached into the Traveler's Bag and grasped the hilt of the dark, iron-black broadsword.
Suddenly, his inner worries, like clouds in the sky, were scattered by a terrifying wind, vanishing in an instant.
Why fear a bestowment from fate?

Why fear the arrangements of the gods?
To hell with them all!
May they all go to hell!
In that moment, Lumian was filled with courage, feeling as though he could swing his broadsword at the True Creator Himself if He appeared before him right then.
He drew the black broadsword, its flames extinguished yet still radiating intense heat, and handed it to Madam Magician.
Madam Magician looked at him, took the sword, and joked, "How about we call it the 'Sword of Courage'?"
"The Sword of Courage..." Lumian paused for a moment.
As the black broadsword left his grasp and was taken by Madam Magician, he shivered violently.
What was I thinking?
I nearly blasphemed His sacred name...
How could I believe I was capable of deicide?
In a moment of fright, Lumian's eyes returned to the black broadsword in Madam Magician's hands.
Could it be its negative influence?
Could it really inspire the courage to commit deicide?
Stars sparkled in Madam Magician's eyes as she gazed at the sword and explained, "This sword fills its bearer with courage, ensuring they are not knocked down by fear or paralyzed by fright. If you had held this sword earlier, even if you were ultimately 'conquered, you could have endured a bit longer.
"It's extremely durable and sharp, capable of blocking direct attacks from demigods and significantly impacting their defenses. It can also enable you to perform Cull at the level of an Iron-blooded Knight, but this will consume a great deal of your spirituality, roughly two-thirds of it in one go.
"The sword can also absorb half of the damage for you. That is, even if you fail to block an attack and suffer a fatal wound, it can reduce the severity of that wound from fatal to grave.
"Each strike carries high-temperature flames, and depending on your will, these flames can spread from your weapon to your enemy's body upon contact, and each strike can cause massive explosion.
"If the sword is coated with your target's blood or if they've been scorched by its flames, you can throw it up to five kilometers into the sky. It will wrap itself in flames, fly toward the target like a live artillery shell, lock on, and then crash down, creating a violent explosion that can destroy everything in a typical public square.
"The maximum range is five kilometers, and it won't return to you on its own; you'll need to retrieve it.

"There are two drawbacks. First, excessive courage is a lethal poison. Human fear and apprehension are among the key reasons humans have survived to this era. A person who only knows courage and not fear will likely lose their ability to judge and analyze, leading to a swift demise.
"Second, it needs companions. You'll need to prepare at least thirty ordinary broadswords to place around it to complete the sealing process. Otherwise, within about fifteen minutes, it will start attacking everyone nearby indiscriminately, including you. Don't think about using the residual aura of the Blood Emperor to avoid or deter this, as this sword doesn't have living characteristics; it's a manifestation of its destructive godhood.
"It also constantly emits high temperatures, causing ordinary broadswords around it to gradually melt. So, you'll need to regularly replace its companions. Similarly, for you as the Reaper, it means enduring a progressively intensifying burn injury.
"That's about it. If you don't mind, we can call it the 'Sword of Courage."
Lumian nodded and replied, "Can the negative effects of being filled with courage be avoided if it's carried in the Traveler's Bag?"
"Yes," Madam Magician nodded gently.
Lumian pondered further and asked, "In the room where I found this sword, there was only one piece of armor, an altar, and two other items. Why didn't it destroy those things?"
"That suit of armor is its companion," Madam Magician replied promptly.
Lumian did not inquire further and began to consider how to use the Sword of Courage: / must fully assess the situation and make the right judgment before drawing the sword...
This isn't a commander's scepter; it's a bugle for the charge...
/ts use must not exceed fifteen minutes...
While thinking, Lumian reached out and took hold of the Sword of Courage.
In the next second, he felt he didn't need to overthink: Fear of this, fear of that—all of that only leads to failure!
One should not be overly cautious or indecisive, just do it!
What is there to fear?
Madam Magician reached into the void and, from nowhere, produced dozens of broadswords with slight variations in design, letting them fly towards Lumian.
After placing the Sword of Courage among these broadswords and stuffing it back into the Traveler's Bag, Lumian snapped back to his senses.
He couldn't help but silently scoff at himself.

An Ascetic's abilities don't work in this case...
Then, he took out a piece of pristine, fine leather and a half-solid, pale yellowish-red candle housed in a transparent glass vial.
Stars again twinkled in Madam Magician's eyes as she took the two items and examined them for several seconds.
"This is indeed the potion formula of the Demoness of Despair, but the human skin carrying it comes from an ancient Demoness of Despair and contains strong, mystically powerful viruses, bacteria, and fungi. It causes those who touch or gaze upon it to gradually contract various diseases. If contact and observation don't exceed ten seconds, recovery will occur on its own," Madam Magician briefly explained about the pristine leather.
Her gaze then shifted to the peculiar candle.
"This is a corpse wax candle, made from the corpse oils of an Iron-blooded Knight and a Demoness of Despair mixed with other substances."
Corpse wax candle... And from two demigods' corpse oils...
Although Lumian had seen much of the world, he still found the candle somewhat eerie and terrifying when he looked at it again.
"What is its use?" he asked, more concerned with this issue while feeling strangely uneasy.
Madam Magician deliberated before responding, "Once lit and used in pacts and Cogitation, it should probably be paired with a ritual, but the specific details and ultimate effect are unclear. Hmm, you have the residual aura of the Blood Emperor, maybe you can try it directly without a ritual."
Lumian didn't hesitate. "Alright, I'll try it now."
With an Angel and Saint watching over him, if anything went wrong, they could save him.
Why wait to try it alone when he got back?
Neither Magician nor The Hanged Man stopped him.
Lumian took the corpse wax candle from the glass jar and sat cross-legged on the deck.
Snap-his fingers produced a blazing white flame, and he immediately lit the black wick of the corpse wax candle.
Then, he closed his eyes, visualized a pattern, and began to Cogitate.
In the tranquil state of dispersion, a hint of dark fragrance entered his nostrils, causing his marrow to itch as if it were about to ignite.
Lumian didn't try to endure this sensation; he simply concentrated on maintaining his cogitative state.
After some time, a dark mist suddenly appeared "before" his eyes.
He seemed to be standing in this mist, on the edge of a barely

visible street.
Across the street, various not-too-tall buildings appeared as if they were mere shadows.
Ding-ding—a vehicle resembling a steam train came from the other end of the street. It had few segments, just two, with no distinctive chimney but a strangely shaped bracket extending from the top, connecting to something in midair.
Wh—Lumian's memory was instantly triggered.
He had seen a similar scene in Fourth Epoch Trier!
It heralded the appearance of the second level in that special mirror world.

Chapter 747: Pact Experience

Ding-ding.

The object resembling a steam train whizzed past Lumian, its presence nearly obscured by the thick, dark mist. Yet, Lumian managed to discern some details: both carriages were blue and seemed to be crammed with passengers standing and facing the street, their expressions blurred and their forms lacking clear outlines.

This is more than what I had witnessed in Fourth Epoch Trier—it isn't powered by steam. As these thoughts flashed through his mind, Lumian noticed someone at the other end of the street, hunched over, pulling a black, two-wheeled cart with a canopy.

A lady sitting in the cart, holding a round fan and dressed in a long skirt, was hidden by the thick mist, which obscured the finer details of her and the puller's attire.

Lumian found himself staring as the black cart approached.

At that moment, the lady in the cart lifted her fan to her face, turned slowly, and looked back at Lumian.

As if the mist had thinned, Lumian could see the back of the lady's hand holding the fan: swollen and shiny with dark, bluish patches.

The puller, with a towel around his neck, stopped, and the lady, who seemed about to step down from the peculiar cart, looked towards Lumian.

A wave of fear washed over him, instinctively repelling any contact with the lady.

Then, he heard a panicked whisper—it was his own voice, although he harbored no such thoughts!

Standing on the edge of the street, enveloped in the dark mist, Lumian felt a sharp tension as if his true self wasn't entirely present.

Lumian's heart tightened as he attempted to step back.

He suddenly found himself floating up, soaring into midair.

He saw the core of the dense mist, a vast city with a bizarre, shadowy high tower beneath which lay unspeakable horrors and gloom.

Unwillingly, he flew towards it.

Almost at the same time, he saw specks of starlight appear.

Lumian abruptly exited his Cogitative state; the city and tower wrapped in the dark mist, the segmented train, and the lady with the floral fan vanished from his "vision."

He opened his eyes to see Madam Magician and Mr. Hanged Man.

"You were a bit off just now, showing signs of losing control, so I

had to wake you," Madam Magician briefly explained.
Lumian thanked her, extinguished the enticingly fragrant corpse wax candle, and detailed the scenes and characters he had witnessed during his meditation.
Madam Magician nodded thoughtfully and remarked, "It's similar to a pact-making ritual.
"This has established a connection between you and some unknown entity, progressively aligning with it. However, unlike a true pact ritual that is directed towards deities, angels, demons, or evil spirits, your pact seems to be with a city.
"If I hadn't interrupted the process earlier, you might have accessed some higher knowledge or power through this pact experience, though it likely wouldn't have been somethingpositive."
Lumian, no novice in mysticism, understood the nature and implications of such rituals.
He pondered and then countered, "So, you're saying that the city in the fog, closely related to Fourth Epoch Trier and very special, has formed a connection with me through this corpse wax candle, despite the vast distances and the layers of seals between us?"
"Yes, it's not an illusion," Madam Magician replied, looking towards the candle encased in a small glass vial with a light yellow and red hue. "Besides the corpse oils of the Iron-blooded Knight and Demoness of Despair, this candle likely contains some special materials to which its origins I'm not aware of. There are two other locations where it could be more effective, allowing you to see and experience more. But those are far too dangerous; you already showed signs of losing control, so I wouldn't recommend trying it now."
"The other two locations..." Lumian's curiosity piqued. "Is one of them Fourth Epoch Trier?"
In Fourth Epoch Trier, he could already partially see that misty city. Lighting the candle and entering a Cogitative state would surely reveal much more sights and experiences!
"Yes," Madam Magician affirmed Lumian's guess.
"And where is the other place?" Lumian inquired further.
Unless the School of Truth's vortex project could unlock Fourth Epoch Trier's seals, it would be a long time before he could re-enter that version of Trier.
Madam Magician eyed Lumian for a few seconds before simply stating, "Bansy."
Bansy... Bansy Harbor? The harbor that had been destroyed by the Church of Storms due to some corruption, where no one had escaped? That was also the former home of Red Angel Medici...
Lumian nodded almost imperceptibly.

Considering the Red Angel's gains in Fourth Epoch Trier and the pathways He took, Lumian had no doubts about the special nature of Bansy Harbor being akin to that of Fourth Epoch Trier.
"Of course, it must be a specific place in Bansy Harbor, not just anywhere," Madam Magician added, then continued, "There's another place I'm not sure about for the candle's efficacy."
"Which place?" Lumian asked, then had a sudden insight, "City of Exiles, Morora?"
"Correct, you're now clearly seeing the connections between things," Madam Magician praised him, sternly advising, "If you do decide to venture to those places and use the corpse wax candle to aid your Cogitation and complete the pact, make sure someone is with you at all times to monitor your condition and wake you immediately if anything unusual occurs."
"I'll remember that," Lumian promised earnestly.
As Madam Magician gestured for Lumian to pack away the candle, she thought for a moment and said, "Use the Sword of Courage as a Sealed Artifact for now. When it's time to concoct the Iron-blooded Knight potion, I'll revert it into a Beyonder characteristic.
"By the way, the Sealed Artifact crafted by Hisoka's Beyonder characteristics should be completed in a few days."
"Thank you, Madam Magician," Lumian expressed his gratitude sincerely.
Although obtaining the Iron-blooded Knight main ingredient so easily felt somewhat unreal, when he thought about how the Blood Emperor's residual aura came to be, which played a key role in it, and the issue of the Underworld Daoist's seal, he realized it wasn't that "easy" after all.
Lumian then discussed the remains of Omebella's umbilical cord and Ludwig's three processing methods, finally asking, "Can I consume that piece of umbilical cord to gain some of the Great Mother's Child of God's bloodline?"
Madam Magician's expression turned slightly strange as she looked towards The Hanged Man Alger, seemingly seeking his opinion on the matter.
The Hanged Man looked at Lumian and asked seriously, "This will indeed bring you some opportunities, but with them, corresponding risks as well. We can help you, but we can't be there every moment. You need to consider whether you're willing to take this risk and if it's worth it."
Madam Magician added, "While the Great Mother's attention might sound nebulous and not tangible enough to have a real effect—after all, you're already under the scrutiny of the being known as Inevitability-having one more such entity's attention

might not seem like a big deal. However, remember, the Great Mother's interference and permeation in our world far exceed those of the Inevitability entity. If you do consume Omebella's umbilical cord remnants, you might face unknown influences or attract special enemies without even realizing it.
"Of course, there's only a potential risk, not a certainty."
What concerned Lumian more was another point.
"Madam Magician, Mr. Hanged Man, it seems you've already confirmed that consuming Omebella's umbilical cord will bring some opportunities?"
This must be a significantly useful opportunity; otherwise, Madam Magician's expression wouldn't have become strange, nor would she have consulted Mr. Hanged Man.
There's no need to hesitate on matters with only downsides; it's the presence of significantpotential benefits that causes Madam Magician to pause!
Madam Magician weighed her words carefully before responding, "The vortex project might involve a location tainted by the Great Mother's power, teeming with monsters spawned from this corruption. If you possess the bloodline of the Great Mother's Child of God, theoretically, you wouldn't need to worry about attacks from them, and you might even be able to command them simply.
"That's one aspect. Another is that once you meet two other prerequisite conditions, you should be able to touch and briefly use a Grade O Sealed Artifact."
Grade 0 Sealed Artifact... Extremely Dangerous. Not to be inquired, disseminated, described, or spied; capable of destroying a country or even the whole world... Lumian's spirit lifted at the mention.
So far, he had indirectly encountered two Grade 0 Sealed Artifacts: 0-01 and 0-05.
"What's the number of that Grade O Sealed Artifact?" Lumian curiously asked. "Why would having the Great Mother's Child of God bloodline allow me to touch and briefly use it?"
Madam Magician glanced at Lumian and said, "I can't tell you the details yet. All I can say is, it's not the Child of God bloodline of the Great Mother that allows you to touch it, but rather the integration of Omebella's umbilical cord remnants with you that helps you access it without facing severe danger, because it originated from Omebella's remains."
Omebella's remains... Omebella had remains before being born? No, that's normal, as there are already remnants of the umbilical cord before She was born... Ah, the one that shares the same name? No, obviously, it's more than just sharing names... Lumian pondered and then asked, "Are you referring to the remnants of the

Goddess of Harvest from ancient times?"
times?"

Chapter 748: Despair Ritual

Madam Magician confirmed Lumian's guess, "Yes, the remains of Omebella, the Goddess of Harvest."

The remains of the Goddess of Harvest... a Grade O Sealed Artifact... contact should be possible and briefly usable... Lumian asked eagerly, "What are the other two prerequisites, besides merging with the remnants of Omebella's umbilical cord?"

Magician laughed self-deprecatingly and said, "I really shouldn't have told you this; it's spurred you to truly consider taking risks.

"Of course, as a high-ranking Astromancer, I can't say I didn't foresee this. Telling you everything and letting you decide is my choice.

"The two prerequisites are: "First, you must have been betrayed by a direct relative; second, you must be female."

Wh-—This clearly disappointed Lumian.

He felt he met the betrayal requirement, as his biological father had abandoned him and his mother, leading to his grandfather's bankruptcy. But why did he have to be a woman?

Madam Magician seemed to guess his thoughts.

"You barely meet the betrayal criterion. As for being female, in the world of mysticism, there are ways to temporarily transform you into a woman, such as a special mystical item from the Demoness pathway, which doesn't necessarily require a high Sequence.

"That's true..." Lumian thought of the Lie earring.

Although it couldn't change his gender, its ability to alter appearances or adjust height was equally magical.

If such items existed, then surely there must be artifacts that could change one's gender, which, given Lumian's understanding of the Demoness path, he believed to be almost certainly existent, albeit rare and special.

Lumian's hope was rekindled about accessing Omebella's remains. That was a Grade O Sealed Artifact!

Madam Magician, with a quirky expression, gave another reminder. "If you truly consume Omebella's umbilical cord remnants and possess the bloodline of the Great Mother, you will forever be unable to approach Pride Armor.

"Your backstabbing of it would fade over time, but once you become a false Omebella, it will target you first and always, unless there's someone more special present who's worth targeting."

Is this a manifestation of Pride Armor's hatred for the Earth pathway? In future battles, if I'm nearby, Franca and the others won't be able to use Pride Armor... However, between Pride Armor and a Grade O Sealed Artifact, any sane person knows which to

choose, even if the latter is only for temporary use... Lumian nodded, indicating he understood.
Madam Magician didn't continue the topic.
"The deal with the Eternal Blazing Sun Church can move forward. Let me know the agreed time and place for the transaction.
"That Sealed Artifact can't be transferred by you; it's too dangerous. Have the Purifiers prepare to seal it on-site; she will appear herself."
"Alright." Lumian took this opportunity to relay other information he had gathered in the past few days.
Hearing that the Demon Warlock Burman was influenced by Harrison from Resurrection Island, wanting to touch the mark of deep death, and the evil spirit he summoned and killed was suspected to be himself, Madam Magician turned her head towards Mr. Hanged Man.
Lumian had previously heard from Madam Magician that the Tarot Club was already investigating Resurrection Island, specifically Mr. Hanged Man and Ma'am Hermit.
The one known as the 'Stormbringer' among the Major Arcana cards thoughtfully said, "This is related to something I'm investigating.
"I can't reveal the specifics yet, but you should know Harrison is likely to appear in places closely linked to death, darkness, dusk, and decay. If you encounter someone of unknown origin in such scenarios, remember to tell me."
Death, darkness, dusk, decay.. Truly someone from Resurrection Island... Lumian wasn't surprised by Mr. Hanged Man's hint.
He was more concerned about whether Resurrection Island's 'resurrection' was indeed a true resurrection.
Madam Magician could read what he was pondering.
"I've said before, we aren't Beyonders of the Death pathway, so we don't fundamentally understand the situation on Resurrection Island, and it's difficult to have a precise view of their so-called 'resurrection.' Maybe a direct encounter with Harrison or another islander will provide the insights you're seeking.
"The only thing I can say now is, think about Demon Warlock Burman. His condition had clearly worsened since Harrison led him to kill what seemed to be his own evil spirit. The inhabitants of Resurrection Island likely have issues.
"Heh, I was right last time when I said the Arden evil spirit might still be alive after the related ritual."
Lumian fell silent.
Upon returning to Trier, Lumian promptly made his way to 9 Rue Orosai and knocked on the door of Room 702.

"*Why are you here again?*" Franca opened the door with a look of disdain.
He had left less than an hour ago!
Fortunately, it was daytime. She hadn't been planning anything yet—what if she had been scared out of her wits?
Lumian glanced at Jenna, who was curled up on the living room sofa with a book, propping herself up to look at him. He smiled at the two Demonesses and said, "I've managed to obtain the potion formula of the Demoness of Despair."
"Ah?" Franca looked puzzled.
Hadn't he just acquired the Iron-blooded Knight potion formula?
Or had he accomplished something significant in the few minutes since he left?
Jenna was equally baffled, thinking Lumian was joking at first.
Despair was a Sequence 4 potion formula that contained the method humans used to pry open the gates to godhood. *How could it be obtained so easily?*
In a flash of thought, Franca and Jenna asked in unison: "Did you go to the Blue Avenger?"
"Have you finished exploring the Blue Avenger?"
"Just a preliminary exploration," Lumian squeezed past Franca, smiling as he spoke.
"You got the Demoness of Despair potion formula from just a preliminary exploration?"
Jenna asked, somewhat incredulously.
Lumian chuckled.
"That's one of the Blood Emperor's legacies. A Sequence 4 potion formula should be considered pretty normal among the treasures."
"What else did you find?" Franca asked curiously after closing the door.
Lumian casually took a seat on an armchair and recounted his adventure aboard the Blue Avenger, including his interactions with Madam Magician and Mr. Hanged Man from start to finish.
"That corpse wax candle sounds rather sinister," Franca genuinely exclaimed.
Jenna nodded in agreement, feeling like she had just heard a horror story.
As a Beyonder of the Demoness pathway, friend of a Hunter, hearing that the candle was made from the corpse oils of an Iron-blooded Knight and a Demoness of Despair always made her inadvertently think of herself, Franca, and Lumian.
Just as Jenna felt Franca had voiced her own thoughts, she heard her female companion eagerly propose, "Last time in Fourth Epoch Trier, I barely saw what that misty city looked like. You didn't

describe it clearly enough. Can I use that candle to make a pact and see the misty city from inside or from the air?
"You guys be my guardians!"
"That candle burns very quickly. I only tried it once, and it used up a fifth of it," Lumian thought aloud, "Let's wait for a chance to visit Bansy Harbor or enter Fourth Epoch Trier, then you can try it. Besides, Madam Magician said that without the Blood Emperor's residual aura, a specific ritual is needed to assist, and no one knows yet what that ritual is like.
Maybe once we're in Bansy or Fourth Epoch Trier, influenced by the environment, we won't need the ritual anymore."
"That'll do," Franca relented.
A corpse wax candle that could only be used four more times obviously needed to be reserved for the best occasions.
Franca turned to Lumian. Franca, brimming with enthusiasm, said to Lumian, "Let's see the Demoness of Despair's potion formula."
"What's my reward?" Lumian joked.
Franca clicked her tongue.
"I'll keep an eye out at the Demoness Sect for any mystical items that can change gender and give it to you for free."
With that, Franca's smile grew even brighter, her eyes sparkling.
"I really look forward to that day."
Jenna imagined it for a moment and found herself also a bit excited.
Considering the potential consequences of debating over this topic, Lumian pretended to be at a loss for words and quickly took out a sheet of delicate human skin from his Traveler's Bag and laid it on the coffee table.
The three only glanced at the potion formula before swiftly moving away, taking a moment before returning to continue.
After a few repeats, the contents of the Sequence 4 potion formula fully emerged in their minds: "Name: Despair; "Sequence: 4; "Main ingredients: Plague Mother Serpent's venom sac; Silver Hunter's crystal; "Supplementary ingredients: 10 milliliters of Plague Mother Serpent's bile, three fragments of the Silver Hunter, a fresh branch of mistletoe, and 10 milliliters of blood from seven victims who died from different plagues.
"Ritual: Involve over thirty thousand people in a severe plague. The more who die, the stronger the despair and suffering, the better the ritual effect."
In a brief silence, Franca hissed, "Isn't this ritual too evil? I can't do such a thing!"
She felt that if she succumbed to the urge to advance, to become a

demigod, and caused such a plague, she would truly fall and truly become a Demoness!
Jenna shook her head, her face full of fear.
She couldn't imagine becoming that kind of person.
She would rather stay forever at the Demoness of Affliction Sequence!
"It's not just about being evil, it's obviously more difficult than the Iron-blooded Knight's ascension ritual," Lumian said from another angle.
Using the capabilities of the Demoness of Affliction along with auxiliary media and items, turning a contagion into a plague that swept through thirty thousand people wasn't too challenging. However, in any city with such a large population, official organizations existed, and they would likely notice the outbreak soon after it began. That would lead to targeted interventions and possibly even identification of the disease's source—the Demoness of Affliction herself—leading to her elimination.
If she avoided cities and spread the disease from one small town or village to another, it would take an exceedingly long time. The longer the process dragged on, the greater the chance of various mishaps that could cause the ritual to fail. For example, discovery by the official Beyonders, natural containment of the disease, or other unforeseen events.
Compared to this, the Southern Continent might be more suitable for the Demoness of Affliction to advance.
"Yes," Franca said with a pained expression, "Is there no way to bypass this ritual? Or is there an equivalent, less evil ritual?"
Jenna racked her brain but couldn't think of any shortcuts that didn't involve killing innocents.
Lumian, with a carefree smile, said, "It's simple. After you reach Sequence 5, you could switch to Iron-blooded Knight. If you care—or rather, prefer to remain a Demoness—you can then check whether the ritual of the Demoness of Unaging is evil. If it isn't, you could switch back."
"Uh..." Franca and Jenna were stunned.

Chapter 749: Conjugate Captain and Members

After her initial shock, Franca pondered thoughtfully, Maybe this idea isn't so bad after all...

Wasn't I originally aiming to become an Iron-blooded Knight? But then there's Jenna...

Seeing Franca silent, Lumian said with a meaningful smile, "There's no need to take some things too seriously. We've all used Lie before and changed our appearances, adapting quite well, haven't we? I once even turned into a dog without any lingering trauma. As long as it's not permanent and you can change back, occasionally switching things up can actually be quite fun. Remember, you're just acting."

Lumian knew Jenna was already aware that the Demoness pathway led to changes from male to female, whereas the Hunter's pathway did the opposite, occurring at Sequence 7 Witch and Sequence 4 Iron-blooded Knight.

He also knew Franca suspected Jenna was aware of this.

But since the Demoness of Pleasure wanted to continue deceiving herself, he didn't mind helping a bit by keeping his words vague.

"Temporarily... If the ritual of the Demoness of Unaging isn't evil, I can switch back... A

Demoness of Unaging doesn't sound so evil..." Jenna muttered to herself before saying, "!

think Lumian's suggestion is worth considering."

Franca nodded in agreement, on the verge of saying more but stopping herself.

Jenna chuckled self-deprecatingly, "I'm only at Sequence 7, just a Witch. Why am I even considering becoming a demigod and switching back and forth?

"Dammit, it feels like when I first became Showy Diva. Though I was always saving money topay off debts, it didn't stop me from dreaming of becoming a famous actress, earning thousands of verl d'or a year, and wondering how I'd spend all that money..."

"Me too, me too," Franca echoed, attempting to explore the feasibility, "If we switch, how do we complete the ritual for a thirty-person Iron-blooded Knight team?"

Lumian clicked his tongue and continued, "You'd better pray that by then I've become an lron-blooded Knight. Having an Iron-blooded Knight as a team member can significantly reduce the number of people required. Besides, we already work well together."

"Is that possible?" Franca first instinctively felt there was a problem, then muttered to herself, "A ritual is just a ritual. After it's

done, there's really no need to maintain the previous state, meaning the captain and team members could swap places and form anew team again. What do you call that? That's called recycling, sustainable development!"
The more Franca thought about it, the more excited she became.
"Once I also become an Iron-blooded Knight, Jenna will have two demigod teammates, plus Anthony and Lugano. She shouldn't need to look for anyone else.
"If Ludwig is still with us by then, not having broken his seal, things will be even simpler; we could be his godmothers!"
We'd be Ludwig's godmothers, and Lumian would be his godfather... Although this isn't anything amazing, there are many similar examples, but still.. Jenna glanced at Franca, wanting to remind her of something, but ultimately decided against it.
The more they discussed the details, the more awkward it got, so it was best to leave them be.
With a new strategy to avoid the Demoness of Despair's ritual, Franca and Jenna felt much better.
The former said to Lumian, "There's a mysticism gathering in a few days. Touch base with the Professor and others to probe whether any members of the Moses Ascetic Order are among them. It's not too urgent since Madam Judgement told me that the Tarot Club has informants inside the Moses Ascetic Order who can provide the necessary information. But I'm not sure if that informant belongs to the Trier region and knows the local circumstances, while the Mirror Person, Griffith, is definitely in Trier."
Lumian nodded and replied, "I also need to ask about the Harvest Priest potion formula and corresponding materials. Boosting the team's strength will help us complete the ritual later.
Jenna listened quietly for a while before interjecting, "Can you help sell that Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic for me? The level of the mysticism gatherings I attend aren't high enough; nobody can afford an item of that Sequence."
She was thinking about the Demoness of Pleasure potion materials she was about to receive from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church. Franca's Pleasure was almost digested, and it wasn't too good to still owe her companion money. After all, she couldn't use the Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic herself.
Lumian could probably guess Jenna's thoughts, subtly gesturing towards his Traveler's Bag.
His implication was clear: you've seen my Iron-blooded Knight and Demoness of Despair potion formulas; how come you haven't thought about owing me a substantial debt?

Lumian hoped this approach would make Jenna worry less about owing money, suggesting she borrow more and hire an Artisan to turn the Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic into a mystical item for use.
The stronger you are, the easier it is to repay debts!
Sitting on the sofa, Jenna scoffed at Franca, gesturing towards Lumian.
Her message was clear: when I need to use those two potion formulas to advance, I'll pay you back!
"I'll keep an eye out," Franca said, unaware of the silent conversation between Lumian and Jenna.
She then said, "We can start gathering some supplementary ingredients for Iron-blooded Knight and Demoness of Despair now, like the mud soaked with soldiers' blood from a major battlefield and the blood of seven victims of the plague, just to be prepared in case we're short on time later. Who knows, by then, we might find another way to bypass the plague ritual. Let's get ready now."
Hearing about the preparations for the potion, Lumian nodded and then remembered something.
He stood up and walked over to the full-length mirror in the room, pressing his right hand against it.
He then activated the contract ability from Bloody Jack, sensing the mirror imprints he had left behind.
Soon, Lumian used the mirror and its otherworldly connection to detect two imprints from afar—one clear and one blurry.
The clear one belonged to the full-length mirror in Moran Avigny's study, while the blurry one changed on its own, shifting positions and making it hard to track.
I can sense it... That must be the imprint on the mirror inside the Blue Avenger's vault... Using the link between the imprint and myself, no matter how it blurs or shifts, I can teleport directly to it, as long as I can step through the mirror, Lumian pondered for a while but decided not to borrow Franca's Mirror Cufflink for an experiment.
This was because his spiritual intuition and a warning from fate told him that if he teleported to that imprint now, he might never return, or he might return as Alista Tudor.
Withdrawing his hand, Lumian shared the results of his attempt with Franca and Jenna.
Afterward, Jenna left to visit various hospital morgues. This was both to look for opportunities to act as a Witch and to see if there were any bodies that had died from severe contagious diseases.
With the Order of All Extinction and the Sick Church not yet eradicated in Trier, there definitely were deaths from the plague,

just not many that could cause a widespread outbreak.
Standing by the window, Lumian saw Jenna appear on the street and turned to Franca, saying, "You might have to become a Demoness of Despair, so it would be good to think about how to find an alternative to that ritual."
"Why must I?" Franca responded, clearly astonished.
Lumian chuckled. "Have you noticed that all the high-ranking members of the Demoness Sect are Demonesses? Do you think it's because they can't get their hands on the Iron-blooded Knight potion formula and Beyonder characteristics?"
"But the Demoness Sect doesn't prohibit Demonesses from switching to the Hunter pathway..."
"That's indeed a contradiction," Lumian speculated. "I suspect that those angelic-tier Demonesses can't find higher Sequence Hunter pathway Beyonder characteristics to change back into men, so they're not keen on seeing their subordinates regain themselves.
It has become an unspoken rule. You know, most of the high-ranking Demonesses are twisted in spirit, psychopathic, and enjoy seeing others in pain while hating to see them happy."
According to the intelligence Lumian and Franca received from Madam Magician and Madam Judgement, starting from Sequence 4, Hunters and Demonesses could switch pathways, with gender determined by the highest Sequence attained, and consuming potions of the same Sequence but from neighboring pathways to enhance one's strength could cause significant problems.
Franca was silent for a long moment before saying, "If I digest the Affliction potion and still haven't found an alternative to the Despair ritual, I'll request to end my mission with the Demoness Sect from Madam Judgement. She should understand and wouldn't allow me to carry out something like spreading a horrific plague."
After saying this, Franca relaxed and muttered, "Besides, wouldn't it be odd if Jenna becomes an Iron-blooded Knight and I remain a Demoness by then?"
"Life is short, why not give it a try?" Lumian jested.
Before Franca could react, Lumian leaped over the sofa with a stride and headed out the door.
Bursts of black flames shot through the wooden door, chasing after Lumian's back but gradually veering off target and dissipating into the air.
Franca's curse still rang clear in Lumian's ears, "If you have what it takes, try it yourself!"
With a grin, Lumian stepped out into the street.
Watching Ludwig eat, he pulled up a chair opposite him and

casually asked, "What ingredients or spices are needed for the third method of cooking those umbilical remains?"
By the side, Lugano was taken aback. "What umbilical remains?"
Lumian smiled. "The umbilical remnant of the Child of God that Father Montserrat was carrying."
Lugano's expression froze.

Chapter 750: Source of Life

After a few seconds, Lugano stuttered, "Can you actually eat that?"
What happens if you do eat it? What are the changes?
Does it cause the Child of God to be born?
Lumian glanced at Lugano's arm and said, "What can't be eaten?"
Lugano suddenly felt a sharp phantom pain and shook his head vigorously. "No, never mind!"
He wanted to get away from Ludwig and Lumian but couldn't think of an excuse on the spot.
After Ludwig swallowed a mouthful of cheese bread, he spoke slowly, "Top-tier ingredients don't need much accompaniment or seasoning. We just need to give it a symbol. That includes nine main staple ingredients: wheat, oats, rye, rice, potatoes, sweet potatoes, corn, cassava, and any other kind of bean. Cook them with the umbilical remains in cow's or sheep's milk for half an hour, and it's ready to eat. This dish is called 'Source of Life."
Are you cooking or performing a mystical rite? Lumian muttered under his breath.
Of course, a Gourmet pathway's Chef, who concocted alcoholic beverages and cooked various dishes, was essentially conducting corresponding mystical rites.
Thoughtfully, Lumian asked, "Actually, it doesn't have to be these nine ingredients, right? As long as the concept of main ingredients and their quantity is satisfied? Likewise, other kinds of milk would work too?"
Ludwig shook his head. "No, this way tastes the best."
So, what you're saying is, the method I mentioned would work but won't taste as good? No
wonder it's the Gourmet pathway, always chasing culinary perfection... Lumian stood up and instructed Lugano to buy some of the ingredients.
Lumian's Traveler's Bag only contained dry rations that could be eaten right out of the package.
For Trier, a leading global metropolis, the ingredients Ludwig needed were easily collected, and by noon, Lumian and Lugano had returned to see Ludwig placing the main ingredients along with the umbilical remnant into a stew pot filled with several hundred milliliters of milk.
These steps had to be completed by a Chef himself, to endow them with mysticism, to coax out the designated uniqueness of the ingredients and maintain them to a degree conducive to absorption. Done by anyone else, the dish might have no effect or turn into poison.

After simmering for a while, Lumian smelled the starchy aroma mixed with the milk and saw dense milky white steam rising above the pot.
The steam did not disperse but condensed in midair and slowly settled back into the pot, carrying a tantalizing scent tinged with blood.
At that moment, Ludwig turned to Lumian and licked his lips, asking, "Do you want to add sugar or salt?"
"*What differences do they bring?*" Lumian asked cautiously.
Ludwig responded seriously, "The taste, one is sweet, the other is salty. Which do you prefer?"
Lumian, sensing the choice, relaxed and asked with a smile, "Which do you prefer?"
"I can't eat it..." Ludwig said regretfully, mumbling, "Sweet is tasty, salty is good too. If only it could be split into two parts, one sweet, one salty..."
As he spoke, the young boy, seemingly agitated, sprinkled some salt and then tossed in some sugar.
Lumian watched amusedly, not stopping him.
For him, the taste of the Source of Life was not important; its effect was.
Finally, Ludwig instructed Lugano to extinguish the flame and removed the contents of the pot.
It was a palm-sized piece of starchy congealment, white and soft, sticky and gooey.
The surface of the food was covered with red spots, as if blood had seeped out from within.
"It's ready to eat." Ludwig tried hard not to drool.
"Will it be effective with just one bite, or do I need to eat it all?" Lumian asked, his curiosity reminiscent of his days learning various experiments, which often frustrated Aurore with his questions.
"All of it," Ludwig said with a look of disappointment.
Lumian picked up the steaming, slightly scalding food, brought it to his mouth, and took a bite.
The sweet and salty flavors melded together, offsetting each other's intensity in a unique way that relieved Lumian of any mental burden. He quickly devoured the Source of Life.
"Will it work right away?" an eager Lumian asked, already resolute in his intentions.
Ludwig pointed to the master bedroom.
"You'll need to sleep first."
Sleep? With a slight sigh, Lumian left the dining table, returned to his room, and lay down on his bed.

Closing his eyes, he felt his body gradually warm up, his consciousness becoming heavier and heavier...
In the darkness, Lumian heard soft sobs.
He turned his head, carefully discerning the sound.
It was of a little girl whispering, "Mommy... Mommy..."
The voice grew louder, more mature, and more piercing.
"Mommy! Mommy!"
The cries drew closer, as if they were right beside Lumian, resonating within him.
"Mommy! Mommy!"
Inside my body... Lumian suddenly jolted awake, regaining his senses.
The darkness shattered, and sunlight pierced his eyes.
He sat up abruptly, freeing himself from the dream.
The cries of "mommy, mommy" still echoed faintly in his mind.
Did I hear the Child of God crying? Lumian looked down at himself.
He undressed and found nothing unusual, but he knew something about him was different now, an indescribable change.
He didn't feel the Great Mother's gaze, which made him even more cautious.
Dressed again, he left his room to find Lugano sneaking glances his way.
"Are—are you alright?" Lugano, who had been caught red-handed, asked instinctively.
Lumian chuckled. "It's okay, I won't become the Child of God of the Great Mother."
Seeing Lugano eyeing his stomach, Lumian added, "Nor have I conceived Her."
After speaking, he left the still-concerned Lugano behind and walked out of the apartment.
The afternoon sun was perfect, and with nothing much to do in the next couple of days, Lumian decided to stake out a particular spot.
That place was the Trier catacombs.
Knowing that Harrison from Resurrection Island might appear at places associated with death, darkness, dusk, and decay, Lumian's first thoughts were of the Dream Festival and the Trier catacombs—locations rife with death and dark mysticism.
In the first level of the catacombs, by the "Entrance to the Old Ossuary" leading deeper below, Lumian sat next to a withered, scattered skeleton with a lit white candle, quietly observing each visitor descending into or returning from the depths.
Soon, a group of students passed by, spotting Lumian sitting

alongside the catacombs bones.
The leader, a tall, thin man with glasses, asked Lumian curiously, "Why are you sitting here?"
Lumian casually responded, "I've been down to the lower levels many times and lost interest. Now, I just want to sit here quietly and watch everyone and everybody that comes and goes, to see who never leaves."
"That sounds interesting," the students said, holding their white candles. They decided to sit down too and observe if any of those returning from the depths showed signs of fear.
The tall, bespectacled man chose to sit beside Lumian and struck up a conversation.
"Do you really think not lighting a white candle here could lead to mishaps?"
Lumian glanced at him and chuckled, "You could try it, and we'd all see what happens."
Before the students could respond, Lumian spoke in a relaxed tone, "I didn't believe in these things before, but then..."
He suddenly lowered his voice.
Two of the female students blurted out, "What happened?"
"Then..." Lumian wore a reminiscent expression, "I met someone who had encountered the Montsouris ghost. You know the legend of the Montsouris ghost, right?"
The students nodded together.
You really know Trier's spooky tales well... Typical of Underground Trier creatures—students...
Lumian sighed, "His immediate family all died, and he thought he could escape it. But one day, when I went to see him, I found him hanged from a window frame.
"Since then, I've been strictly following every rule of Underground Trier."
The students looked at each other, a bit frightened by the tale told by a peer.
"It seems we really shouldn't extinguish this candle," the tall student with glasses said regretfully.
Lumian lowered his voice again, "Have you ever encountered such a thing? There are extra books, blankets, and clothes in your dorm —none which belong to you—but the administrator tells you that no one else lives there."
Two students turned pale, as if hearing the most terrifying ghost story.
As if they were seeking a lifeline, they asked, "Yes, that happens, do you know why?"
Lumian shook his head and sighed, "I heard those are the people

who extinguished their candles here. They completely vanished, with no one remembering them."
Hearing this, the tall student shivered instinctively.
Suddenly, he felt something tap his shoulder.
He turned to look and saw a ghastly pale skeletal hand.
"Ah!" He screamed, jumping up.
Lumian pulled back the bone hand he had picked up somewhere, his smile mocking. "You're really scaredy-cats! Scared already?"
The students were stunned, and after a while, they forcefully said, "No! That was just a reflex!"
As they seriously considered whether to beat up the prankster, someone came up the stone steps to the second level.
He wore a blue top and yellow pants, his face deeply wrinkled and his white hair sparse and dry, holding a short lit white candle.
It was an elderly catacombs administrator.
Lumian slightly frowned.
He had seen this catacombs administrator before in the giant tomb chamber housing the Samaritan Women's Spring, but the administrator hadn't used a white candle then.

Chapter 751: "Help"

Lumian had always assumed that the catacombs administrator, marked with light brown age spots, had been assimilated by the catacombs themselves, becoming part of this peculiar place, and would over time become more corpse-like, losing all semblance of life and forever sleeping within an upright, decaying coffin.

Yet, here he was, able to leave the massive tomb chamber that housed the Samaritan Women's Spring, still carrying a burning white candle.

Taking turns guarding the entrance to the Samaritan Women's Spring, the longer you stay, the deeper the catacombs' peculiar erosion takes hold, making you less and less like the living until finally, you no longer need a lit white candle to prevent being consumed by the catacombs? *Can one slowly recover once they rotate out?* Lumian speculated as he watched the elderly catacombs administrator ascend the steps.

As he drew closer and the candlelight illuminated his features, the group of students also got a clearer look at the newcomer.

They recognized the uniform of the catacombs administrator but had never met one so aged he seemed nearly decomposed.

His face, speckled with light brown age spots and his eyes black and icy, coupled with his faint, almost non-existent breath, instilled an involuntary fear in them, prompting them to huddle together for warmth and courage.

With each soft step echoing, the elderly caretaker stopped at the Entrance to the Old Ossuary.

He then turned, casting his chilling gaze upon Lumian.

"I need to speak with you," the catacombs administrator said in a hoarse, matter-of-fact tone.

Me? Do we know each other? Plus, I came here on a whim, driven by impulse and didn't inform anyone of my plans. *Why would you need to see me?* Lumian was taken aback, as were the university students.

They hadn't expected this intriguing, skilled prankster to be acquainted with such a frightening catacombs administrator.

Had he really explored the catacombs so often that he had befriended the administrators?

Perplexed, Lumian stood up and followed the elderly administrator to the side of the Entrance to the Old Ossuary.

He wanted to hear what this was all about and why he was being sought out.

In the dense darkness, with just a stub of a white candle making his face appear more ghastly, the emotionless caretaker said,

"There's been an anomaly with a corpse on the fourth level's southwest corner. Handle it."
"Me?" Lumian pointed to himself with his empty right hand.
Why are you asking me to deal with this? There are other catacombs administrators, official Beyonders for this sort of thing. Why me?
And you're ordering me around as if I'm a mercenary paid to handle such matters, without even discussing compensation...
"Correct." The elderly administrator nodded gently. "My body and spirit are nearing decay, and I can no longer engage in combat."
Lumian eyed the administrator with curiosity, probing, "Do you know me?"
The deep wrinkles on the administrator's face unfolded into a strange smile. "You are one of our kind."
One of our kind... Lumian mused, a guess forming in his mind.
"Deal with it now. The longer you wait, the more troublesome it becomes." The administrator turned and headed back towards the "Entrance to the Old Ossuary."
! came to stake out Harrison from Resurrection Island, not to work for you... Lumian muttered silently, his curiosity piqued as he followed the more corpse-like than living administrator down the stone steps.
During this, he flashed a smile and waved at the students, frightening them into silence; none dared to respond.
Once Lumian and the elderly administrator's figures had disappeared deep into the stone stairway, with only a flicker of candlelight remaining, the students finally relaxed and exhaled in relief.
That guy really knew the catacombs administrator well!
He must be extremely familiar with this place!
Were the rumors he shared actually true?
Recalling Lumian's description of the dorm anomalies and the consequences of extinguishing a candle, the students shivered in unison, pulling their candles closer to their bodies.
Descending layer by layer, past François' Tomb and the Blood Order Hall, Lumian followed the old administrator, quickly reaching the southwest corner of the catacombs' fourth level.
Using the remaining third of his white candle, Lumian saw a giant skeleton, about three to four meters tall, composed of bones from different corpses and shaped like a human with seven or eight heads, all eye sockets dark, void of any colored flame.
At that moment, the giant skeleton was opening tomb doors, extracting sharp bones, and adding them to its massive bone sword.

The candlelight spread only slightly, illuminating the area minimally as darkness flowed like water, bringing an indescribable chill and horror.
Even without getting close, Lumian involuntarily felt fear and resistance, as if he were walking towards death.
His blue eyes darkened to iron-black, reflecting the ghastly pallor of the aberrant skeleton.
Deep within its chest, it felt as if he had to cleave through layers of white bones to reach it.
"You see it? Take care of it," the old caretaker commanded again, as if ordering a subordinate.
"What abilities does it have?" Lumian wasn't averse to lending a hand—he had just acquired a powerful item and was eager to use it, but he couldn't just rush into battle without understanding the monster's capabilities and planning his strategy.
The candle in the administrator's hand was now just a stub, its dim flame stubbornly clinging on.
He shook his head and said, "I'm not sure, but it's being suppressed by the catacombs, unable to show much of its potential. Once it gets dark outside, we might not have that advantage. We must clear it out now."
The catacombs are suppressing it... Lumian mused aloud, "How often have these anomalies occurred recently? Is it frequent?"
"It's normal, once or twice a month," the elderly catacombs administrator replied in a raspy voice.
Even if it's broadly sealed, some abnormalities still occur? That's similar to other areas of the Underground Trier... As Lumian was about to ask more questions, the giant, mud-and-mold-covered skeletal aberration seemed to notice them, suddenly turning around and raising its massive bone sword.
The surface of the giant sword burst into pale-white flames.
Thud, thud, thud, the skeleton with several heads moved stiffly but quickly charged toward Lumian and the catacombs administrator.
The surrounding darkness surged over, bringing with it a bone-chilling cold and a terror that seemed to reach into their souls.
Without hesitation, Lumian reached into the Traveler's Bag and grasped the Sword of Courage.
A warm rush quickly spread through his body.
What's there to fear?
Fight, fight, fight!
Lumian drew the iron-black greatsword and charged toward the giant skeleton and its terrifying bone sword.
Then, he swung the Sword of Courage upwards.
A bright white flame with a hint of blue burst forth from the blade.

Bang!
The iron-black greatsword collided with the bone sword, made of numerous sharp bones, in midair.
Lumian's knees bent as his feet sank into the mud.
The skeleton's force was immense, and the bright white-blue flames tangled with the pale-white flames, mutually extinguishing each other.
Lumian was not afraid.
His eyes excited, he tightened his thighs, straightened his knees, and advanced rather than retreated, slashing with his iron-black greatsword toward the colossal creature.
The bone sword responded with the force of a falling boulder.
Boom!
The collision triggered a violent explosion, and the fierce shockwave, carrying the bright white-blue flames, struck the giant skeleton's surface, pushing it back two steps.
Lumian pursued, slashing again with the Sword of Courage.
Rumble! Rumble! Rumble!
With each clash of the huge swords and in every massive explosion, a large number of bones fell from the skeleton, charred, and even the bone sword itself thinned significantly.
Finally, Lumian broke through its defense, cleaving into its chest with one strike.
Boom!
The bright white-blue fireball expanded there, penetrating its entire body.
The giant skeleton froze instantly.
Crash! collapsed entirely, like a stacked block castle knocked over.
Lumian withdrew his iron-black greatsword, turned halfway to the elderly catacombs administrator, and smiled, saying, "Neutralized.""
As he spoke, he returned the Sword of Courage to the Traveler's Bag.
Just after this action, Lumian suddenly sobered up.
Was that it?
Although I had planned to engage in direct combat before drawing the sword, I hadn't considered just a head-on attack...
Truly the Sword of Courage...
Hearing Lumian's words, the elderly catacombs administrator, holding the nearly extinguished white candle, slowly approached.
Lumian, taking advantage of having just provided help, casually asked, "Has anyone visited the Samaritan Women's Spring in the past few months?"
That was supposedly the strongest point of death energy in the

entire catacombs, and Harrison might be drawn there.
The elderly catacombs administrator looked at Lumian in slow motion, his voice hoarse as he said, "Extinguish the candle."
What? Extinguish the candle? Are you trying to kill me? Lumian's first reaction was that the catacombs administrator in front of him meant him harm.
Without a lit white candle here, one would be eerily erased and forgotten by all!
At that moment, the candle in the administrator's hand burned down to the end, flickered once, and was completely extinguished.
Darkness surged toward the old man, seemingly engulfing him in deathly silence.
He did not disappear.
In that instant, Lumian recalled many things, including the catacombs administrator considering him one of their own and his own guess about it.
He hadn't made his final, crazy decision when the darkness around the administrator viciously spread, enveloping him.
His white candle suddenly went out.

Chapter 752: In the Darkness

Dammit!

Though Lumian had toyed with the idea of taking risks, he hadn't truly made up his mind.

The sudden extinguishing of his white candle prompted him to swear under his breath, instinctively preparing to activate the black mark on his shoulder and teleport out of the catacombs.

At that moment, a bone-chilling cold tinged with slight pain surged through the palm of his right hand.

This snap of pain brought him to his senses, thankfully without any further unpleasant changes to his body.

Indeed... Lumian instantly calmed down, abandoning the idea of using his Spirit World Traversal ability.

His suspicions were confirmed!

He clenched his right hand discreetly, ensuring the prominently-marked Underworld Daoist seal wasn't visible to anything lurking in the darkness.

After the elderly, decaying, and clearly unwell catacombs administrator mistook him for a kindred spirit, Lumian suspected it was due to the Underworld Daoist seal.

Given that the Samaritan Women's Spring was closely related to the Underworld Daoist and the catacombs of Trier were likely built to contain its overflowing influence, the administrators took turns guarding the massive tomb chamber leading to the spring.

Since catacombs administrators affected by anomalies could navigate the dark catacombs without a lit white candle and not disappear, theoretically, he should be able to as well, given his Underworld Daoist seal!

Of course, this was extremely risky. A wrong guess could mean dying without leaving a trace, causing Lumian to hesitate despite his wild impulse.

In the pure darkness, where his eyes saw nothing, Lumian felt as if he were in Trier's subterranean river, immersed in cold, damp, heavy, and silent waters.

Yet, he breathed easily; his body and soul strangely drawing air from the dense, dark "waters," sustaining his existence.

He seemed like a fish in the deep sea.

The darkness, like flowing water, layered and pressed down, isolating this space from the surrounding areas and the outside world.

The next moment, Lumian heard the old administrator's raspy, indifferent voice.

"Recently, three people tried to approach the spring, but I stopped

them."
Three people... Lumian's spirit lifted as he asked, "Who were they?"
"One time it was a Blessed of darkness and death with a Hunter," the old administrator described in his own way.
A Blessed of darkness and death with a Hunter.. Isn't that Madame Hela and me? You still remember us... Lumian realized, followed by muttered criticisms.
He had thought this elderly administrator, unlike the more active ones like Kendall and nearing a corpse-like state, didn't recognize people by sight but by sensing their presence— Lumian had encountered two catacombs administrators guiding visitors when he arrived at the Entrance to the Old Ossuary, and they didn't see him as one of their own. Instead, they advised him not to wander alone and always keep a white candle burning for light.
"Who was the third?" Lumian pressed on.
Was it Harrison, or Monette, the incarnation of Amon active in these subterranean catacombs?
The old catacombs administrator responded in a monotone, husky voice, "An outsider, he felt similar to us but also different, so I stopped him."
Similar yet different... an outsider... Lumian pondered these key descriptions and surmised it was probably Harrison from Resurrection Island!
"What did he look like?" Lumian asked, controlling his emotions, seemingly calm.
He couldn't see through the darkness, not even the outline of the old administrator, but he sensed the other was right in front of him, no more than two meters away.
He then heard the old administrator reply: "I've been an administrator for so long, I've forgotten many things. Even death itself vanishes here, let alone our memories. I can't remember what he looked like, only that he didn't resemble an Intisian, nor a Loenese or Feysacian."
After a brief pause, the catacombs administrator continued in his flat tone, "I should go back to rest now..."
Lumian did not try to stop him, nor did he ask further questions.
Although he hadn't heard any footsteps, nor sensed any movement ahead, a very clear thought suddenly struck him: The person has already left.
He didn't look like an Intisian, a Loenese, or a Feysacian... An outsider... Someone who had been to the fourth level of the catacombs in recent months... Lumian replayed thecatacombs administrator's responses in his mind over and over.
Suddenly, he remembered something: Franca had mentioned that

she encountered a man in the catacombs who she suspected came from the world of the Celestial Master—the world they had transmigrated from. Her judgment was based on the man's appearance, which closely resembled the people from that world and was distinctly different from those of the Intisians, Loenese, Feynapotterians, and Feysacians!
So, the person Franca met was the one the elderly administrator persuaded to leave? And
that person could very well be Harrison from Resurrection Island...
/s Resurrection Island actually a node where two worlds converge?
The reason the nautical chart leading to Resurrection Island is incorrect is because it lacks mystical details; even if one reaches the designated sea area, only danger is encountered, with no sight of the goal?
This would nicely explain Franca's divination result that the "chart is genuine" and why adventurers have failed to locate Resurrection Island. The charts are indeed accurate, but they don't record the method to open the "Island's Door"!
If this is the case, there should be a deeper explanation for why Franca and the others were transmigrated, and for the purpose of the Resurrection Islanders appearing on the North and South Continents...
The good thing now is, Franca has seen someone who might be Harrison and has drawn a corresponding portrait through a ritual, which will help us in our future search.
Heh heh, Franca and Jenna's exploration yielded quite a lot of crucial information about many important matters, filled with a sense of being arranged.
This might not have been that entity's doing, but it's highly likely related to Monette, who often haunts this place...
Lumian was particularly puzzled about why the True Creator or Amon valued this matter so much. Their previous "help" was mainly about combating the evil gods beyond the barrier and didn't involve issues from another world.
Hmm, would that Celestial Worthy be counted as one of the evil gods beyond the barrier?
Does He come from the Celestial Master's world?
/s this also considered a part of the evil gods' invasion?"
Lumian speculated briefly before pondering another question: Whether to inform Franca, 007, Madame Hela, and other members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society about this.
Lumian could already picture what would happen: Including Franca, some members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society would desperately set out to sea, searching for Resurrection

Island marked on the sea chart, failing to find the island, but finding it being even more dangerous!
But Lumian preferred to see Franca remain as she was: conflicted about her gender but generally happy.
After a moment of silence, Lumian laughed a bit out of character, whispering self-mockingly in the environment like the dark depths of the sea, "Would you avoid seeking a way to resurrect Aurore because of danger and others' expectations?
"Would you give up resisting because of danger and others' expectations?
"Would you refuse to merge with the bloodline of Omebella because of danger and others' expectations?
"No!"
Lumian made up his mind and began to focus on his surroundings.
He couldn't see anything but faintly sensed figures wandering in the darkness, felt hands reaching out to him, grabbing his arms, ankles, neck, and body, yet not having any tangible effect.
No, there was one thing—Lumian felt distinctly colder, to the point where, with the physical traits of a Reaper, he almost couldn't help but constrict his pores and shiver lightly.
He also heard faint, painful, despairing cries but couldn't discern their specific directions.
Are these the people who vanished in the catacombs before? Lumian tried to listen closely, to find one or two of the missing, to understand their current state, but it was to no avail.
Suddenly, he shivered.
The cold and the dead silence seeped into his mind.
His thoughts became slightly sluggish, and his memories of certain things grew a bit fuzzy.
The Underworld Daoists seal just prevents me from disappearing on the spot, from even dying without a trace, but it can't stop me from being slowly eroded by the abnormalities here, like those catacombs administrators? And, my erosion is clearly faster than theirs...
Lumian snapped a flame into existence, lighting the white candle in his hand.
The darkness, cold, weight, silence, and dampness retreated as the light spread.
Lumian glanced at the candle in his hand, nodding and muttering to himself, "I just interpreted the Underworld Daoist's seal as a kind of alternative white candlelight, but now it seems, they're not the same, fundamentally different. One stems from an anomaly being sealed, the other leverages the power sealing this place?"

As thoughts swirled, Lumian, holding the burning white candle, made his way back along the original route.
Upon returning to the Entrance of the Old Ossuary, he saw that the few university students who had been there were gone.
"Scared off, just like that?" Lumian scoffed softly, leisurely leaving the catacombs and returning to Place du Purgatoire.
In the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702 on 9 Rue Orosai.
Franca, who was about to go out to gather information on the Mirror People, saw Lumian again.
"You're here again? It's the third time today!" the Demoness of Pleasure asked, her lips twitching slightly.

Chapter 753: Rational Franca

Facing Franca's probing, Lumian raised an eyebrow and said, "I've again come across something important that I need to tell you."
Franca eyed Lumian suspiciously, unsure whether he was playing a prank or had actually discovered something new.
Given the frequency of his discoveries, it seemed a bit much, didn't it?
Just this morning, he had returned from the Blue Avenger, having completed an initial exploration that yielded the formula for the Demoness of Despair potion, a Sword of Courage equivalent to a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact, and a specially significant corpse wax candle-all important findings. And now he had more gains in the afternoon?
Ultimately, Franca chose to believe Lumian; after all, he had proven himself a harbinger of chaos on multiple occasions.
She stepped aside to let him into the living room.
"What's it about this time?" Franca asked gravely as she closed the door.
Lumian stood by the window, back to the outside, and said seriously, "Do you remember Mr.
Hanged Man's description of Harrison?"
"I remember-he might appear in places closely linked to darkness, death, dusk, and decay," Franca replied, the oppressive atmosphere stifling her usual retort of not having forgotten what was discussed just that morning.
Lumian nodded and continued, "I had some free time, so I went to the catacombs. I met with the administrator guarding the Samaritan Women's Spring area. He told me that recently, an outsider tried to approach the spring but was stopped by him. This outsider's features are quite different from anyone from the Northern Continent..."
Franca, initially confused, shivered instinctively and blurted out, "Harrison? Was the man with the Eastern features that Jenna and I met actually Harrison?"
She immediately recalled her and Jenna's adventure at the Krismona Night Pillar.
In her urgency, she replaced the more complex description of non-North-Continent-bearing features with "Eastern features".
"It's very likely." Lumian nodded slowly.
Franca was taken aback. "Resurrection Island... Resurrection Island!"
Her lake-blue eyes sparkled with excitement and anticipation.
She asked for confirmation, "Could Resurrection Island be a node

where the two worlds converge?"
"Even if it's not, it's probably closely related to your world," Lumian said, not wanting to dampen her spirits.
Franca paced back and forth excitedly, then wailed, "Why didn't I recognize him then? Why didn't I capture him? Now he's gone and we don't even have a starting point! The Eternal Blazing Sun Church is too slow, not a single piece of feedback!"
After Franca vented her frustration, Lumian calmly said, "You can't blame 007 and the others for being slow; Harrison might no longer be in Trier."
"Mmm," Franca pondered aloud. "I'll announce this at the research society meeting so members in different areas can watch out for anyone resembling Harrison."
Before Lumian could caution her, Franca muttered to herself, "I'll tell them not to seek the island until we find Harrison and obtain detailed information about Resurrection Island. It's too dangerous. If they spot Harrison, they shouldn't rush to recognize him or approach him; pretend they haven't seen him and notify President Gandalf, the chairman, Madame Hela, and us..."
Lumian listened intently and then playfully complimented her, "I thought you'd be too excited to think straight. But surprisingly, you, who usually seem carefree and not too thoughtful, have considered everything quite thoroughly."
Franca wasn't provoked; she replied with a smug grin, "What do you call that? LÃ¼ Duan is never muddled in major matters! If I have to think hard all the time, wouldn't that negate the point of relaxing?"
That made some sense... Lumian asked, puzzled, "Who's LÃ¼ Duan?"
"No need to know!" Franca answered decisively.
Lumian guessed the reason and didn't press further, simply nodding. "We'll share this at the gathering in two days."
Franca hummed in agreement, then her excitement and joy vanished, her body trembling slightly.
"What's wrong?" Lumian asked with concern.
Franca pressed her lips together, speaking softly, "I'm excited about the truth and what the future might hold, but I'm also afraid it won't meet my expectations. I'm scared of facing an answer I can't handle."
After speaking, Franca leaned on the windowsill as if drained of strength.
Lumian offered no comfort, his look one and the same as that Madam Magician had when she looked at him: pity.
He too feared that the hope for resurrection he so desperately

pursued might just be an unattainable illusion.
After a moment, Lumian asked, "Want to have a drink?"
"Sure," Franca responded with a complex smile. "Getting drunk might help me forget these worries. Ah, typical brotherly comfort-offering a drink."
Two days later.
Franca met with Demoness of Black Clarice, at a hunting ground on the edge of the East Lognes Forest, as agreed.
The demigod-level Demoness had swapped her usual black court gown for dark hunting attire and a black hat that covered her long hair, giving her an air of dashing elegance and freshness.
Compared to her previously melancholic beauty, Madame Clarice now radiated a different kind of allure, equally captivating and splendid. Franca eyed the Demoness of Black with appreciation, suppressing the desires that instinctively arose, and relayed the intelligence on the Mirror People that 007 had provided in detail.
Clarice nodded gently, her smile bright as she took a wooden, burgundy-colored briefcase from her horse.
"This is your reward," said the Demoness of Black as she handed the case to Franca.
Franca did not hesitate, thanking her as she unlatched the metal fasteners and opened the modest-sized wooden briefcase.
Inside, the case was divided by pristine ice blocks showing no signs of melting, each compartment containing a bat's head with colorful markings, a gallbladder oozing blood and green bile, a bifurcated tail covered with sleek, sinister scales, and two types of dark red blood in glass vials.
"Affliction's main ingredient and most of the supplementary ingredients are here. If you're not ready to advance, don't try to break the ice I've crafted. That would only infect the bearer with various diseases and lead to a slow death," warned the Demoness of Black."
"Thank you, Madame," Franca quickly counted what supplementary ingredients were still needed.
All that was missing was the fairly common Enfinitas Eucalyptus.
Demoness of Black Clarice commented, "You're very efficient and effective in your tasks.
Perhaps in another year or two, you'll be ready to attempt opening the gate to godhood. But then, we won't reward you with the formula and ingredients for Despair. Instead, we'll inform you of the advancement ritual in advance. Once you're nearly ready, we'll simply give you the Despair potion."
"Is this to prevent High-Sequence potion formulas from being leaked?" Franca asked, understanding dawning on her.

The Demoness of Black nodded.
"Once you earn the right to have a color precede your title, you'll truly access the High-Sequence potion formulas and some of the sect's secrets."
I also want to obtain the Demoness of Unaging potion formula from you all, but without becoming a Demoness of Unaging, I probably can't have a color precede my name... No matter, having prior knowledge of the ritual to see if it's wicked or not is sufficient... Franca didn't hide the anticipation in her expression.
She then steered the conversation back to the investigation of the Mirror People.
"Madame, to what extent should we pursue the Mirror People? Is it enough to thwart their plans and eliminate those who have escaped from the special mirror world?
"We couldn't possibly enter that special mirror world and eradicate their leaders and their foundation while Fourth Epoch Trier's seal remains intact, could we?"
Franca was probing the Demoness Sect's ultimate goal regarding the Mirror People, trying to gauge the state and thoughts of the Primordial Demoness.
Clarice looked at her and said with a refreshing smile, "Let's do what we can for now. When you've advanced to Affliction, we'll tell you more."
Becoming a Demoness of Affliction means entering the core circle of the Demoness Sect, eligible to learn some secrets? Franca was both excited to be drawing closer to the secrets of the Demoness Sect and completing tasks, and somewhat anxious.
Late at night, in a quarry cave in Underground Trier.
AngoulÃªme de François, dressed in a brown woolen coat and wearing a gold brooch, entered this dormant area carrying a carbide lamp.
His right sleeve was rolled up, revealing a glass syringe tied around his elbow filled with a cloudy white liquid.
Behind him followed four or five Purifiers, each with a similar syringe on their arms.
Surrounded by the Purifiers were four tall iron-gray steam robots, responsible for carrying an item over two meters long and about six feet wide.
The item was covered with a red flannel cloth, hiding any details.
AngoulÃªme stopped in the middle of the quarry, gesturing for his teammates to halt as well.
The iron-gray steam robots then set the item on the ground.
As the flannel cover was lifted, a beautifully crafted, classical-looking bed was revealed, making AngoulÃªme and his team feel

tired and drawn to its inviting comfort, wanting to lie down for a good sleep.
AngoulÃªme quickly looked away and, using the hand holding the carbide lamp, pushed the plunger of the syringe, injecting more of the liquid into his body.
Following similar actions from the other Purifiers, a figure in a black nun's outfit suddenly emerged from the other side of the quarry.

Chapter 754: Two Spirits

When the feminine silhouette emerged from the darkness, AngoulÃªme and his companions instantly tensed up.

They were still unsure how to make the humanoid Sealed Artifact move towards the bed on its own; they could only hope that the bed, also a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact, would exert its allure to entice beings to lie upon it.

Of course, the Eternal Blazing Sun Church wouldn't send merely a team of highest-ranking Purifiers for a transaction involving a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact. Undoubtedly, a demigod was overseeing from the shadows, but in the event of an incident, how many could be saved from the clash of two Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts was an uncertainty.

As soon as the somber yet serene-looking woman appeared, she moved toward the elegant, classical bed as if summoned or commanded.

AngoulÃªme and the others remained perfectly still, almost like statues, fearing any sudden movement might startle their target and hinder the positive development of the situation.

Finally, the figure in the black nun's attire lay down on the bed.

She yawned slightly, then closed her eyes, her whole being radiating profound exhaustion, as if she had spent her life's energy.

She fell asleep.

Several Purifiers stepped forward, placing their differently colored leather cases on the ground.

They then pulled up the red flannel cloth to cover both the humanoid Sealed Artifact and the classical bed together.

The iron-gray steam robots also set down another leather case they were carrying.

They lifted the bed and, along with the Purifiers, left the quarry at a measured pace.

Soon, only AngoulÃªme and the nine cases on the ground behind him remained.

At the edge of the quarry, enveloped in deep darkness, a figure dressed in assassin's garb emerged.

She did not speak to AngoulÃªme but moved past the Purifier deacon to inspect the cases one by one.

Eight of the cases were either filled with shimmering gold bars or packed with numerous gold coins, all quite heavy, making Franca's gaze seem disrupted by the gleam of gold.

I've never seen so much gold in my two lifetimes combined... shame it's not mine, Franca thought regretfully as she stowed the

gold, valued at 1.2 million verl d'or, along with the cases into her Traveler's Bag.
Another case contained the main and supplementary ingredients for the Pleasure potion and two folded scrolls.
After verifying everything was correct, Franca nodded to AngoulÃªme in a cold, businesslike tone befitting their professional relationship.
"You keep your promises well. I will continue to provide you with intel.
"Praise the Sun, you are the God of Deeds!" AngoulÃªme exclaimed, spreading his arms slightly in homage, attributing all glory and success to the deity.
Franca then left the quarry, continuously circling around and using her Demoness powers to erase any traces, countering any potential divination or prophecy.
After about seven or eight minutes, she met with Lumian in a secret tunnel in Underground Trier and was transported away by teleportation.
Inside Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai.
Franca handed over the ingredients related to the Pleasure potion along with the leather case to Jenna, while Lumian was already seated on the armchair, engrossed in a reorganized dossier of the Sealed Artifact which wasn't written in a fixed format.
"Number: 1-147 "Original Name: Clémence Athana.
"This Sealed Artifact was born in a magistrate's family in Spahm Village, Zamet region of Upper Hornacis. She was sent to the Zamet Cloister upon reaching adulthood and, two years later, entered Suhit University to study paleobiology. After graduation, she stayed on as a faculty member.
"Her research in paleobiology primarily focused on tracing the remnants of mythical creatures to prove their existence. At the age of twenty-nine, she abruptly resigned from her academic post and returned to her native village, where she secluded herself in her room.
"Over the next two years, her family suffered a series of misfortunes: "Her father, intoxicated, fell into a cesspit at night and drowned; her mother, overcome with grief, hanged herself; her siblings killed each other over inheritance disputes; and her sister, who had gone home to intervene, went missing and was never found...
"The villagers of Spahm blamed her for bringing misfortune and sought to expel her. Not long after, a strange mental plague broke out in the village. By the time the Purifiers realized the issue, it was beyond redemption, and they had to purify all the infected...

"Further research indicated that Clémence Athana harbored two spirits within her, with her soul appearing stitched together.
"It is believed that one spirit orchestrated the tragedies of her family and the village's infection, while the other, unable to cope, became muddleheaded yet fought back instinctively, eventually going mad...
"Additionally, she carried another kind of corruption, distinct from her abilities to manipulate minds and spirits.
"It remains unclear when this corruption first appeared, whether before her return to her hometown or after the death of her parents...
"Sealed two years and four months ago."
"She was sealed not long ago. Among all Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts, her number must be one of the latest," Franca remarked, having appeared behind Lumian at some point, her elbows resting on the back of the armchair as she finished reading the dossier.
Lumian chuckled softly after a pause. "Perhaps one day, this will be my fate."
He could faintly sense Clémence Athana's struggle and resistance, but she ultimately failed and became a monster.
Franca opened her mouth, unsure of what to say.
After a few seconds, she patted Lumian on the shoulder and said, "Look on the bright side, in the grand scheme of things, we're all going to die. What matters is what we do on the path to death."
Lumian folded up the dossier, nodded solemnly, and responded, "Until death!"
At 10 p.m., in the ancient and dilapidated palace of the Nation of the Evernight, members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society materialized in various locations.
Franca immediately spotted 007, who was wearing the lion headgear. She adjusted her hood and approached, asking curiously, "We've received our reward. What's yours?"
"007" AngoulÃªme replied with mixed emotions, "I can now wield a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact with less severe adverse effects."
"Wow, you're basically on reserve for demigod status!" Franca exclaimed enviously.
Her thoughts then turned to Lumian, who also possessed a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact with minor negative effects, essentially putting him in the same reserve category.
Before Lumian embarked on the paths of the divine, 007 had already been a Sequence 5 Beyonder. He was just too busy to serve as vice president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society, so he had never shared this with others.
Thinking about it, 007 wasn't really that enviable after all.

007 glanced at Franca and said, "I used to dream of advancing to Sequence 4 and becoming a demigod, but as I handled more and more Beyonder events, I started to think that it might not be such a good thing. Sigh, fate has pushed me to this point; I can only keep moving forward."
"Right," Franca replied, feeling a sense of kinship. "I have a very important announcement to make soon."
"What is it?" 007 couldn't help but ask impulsively.
Why is Hidden Blade involved in an important matter again?
What is it this time?
So far, the news she brought was crazier and more shocking one after the other!
"You'll find out soon enough." Franca sighed.
She then looked towards Lumian, who was now disguised as Aurore, donning a warlock robe and a black hood, heading towards the Academy group's gathering place.
Lumian, in disguise, nodded gently at Franca.
Seeing that the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society had nearly all arrived, Franca walked directly to the massive stone chair.
Dressed in a plain white robe and resembling a half-giant, Gandalf was nearby. He whispered, "Are you going to warn everyone about the Mirror People?"
"No," Franca looked at Madame Hela standing on the other side and conjured a simple megaphone from the cold air.
"Ladies and gentlemen, I have an announcement to make," Franca's voice echoed through the ancient and dilapidated palace.
Members like Isotope, Bear, and Cerberus of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society turned their attention towards the depth of the palace to see who was speaking.
They suddenly felt uneasy.
The news Hidden Blade had brought before was never good!
Although she helped the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society clean up its internal saboteurs and established more reliable rules, avoiding foreseeable harm, the surging tide still left every participant unnerved.
As everyone ceased their discussions and looked towards her, Franca cleared her throat and started from the rumors about Resurrection Island, recounting her encounter in the catacombs of Trier with a man bearing Eastern looks in their original world.
So, it's about this... There's a continuation of that incident? 007 relaxed slightly.
A humming sound arose in different parts of the old palace, and members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society couldn't

help whispering among themselves.
For most of them, they had already accepted reality, adapted to their current lives, and even had different pursuits. But now, someone was telling them that the matter of transmigration still had secrets; maybe they could even go home!
Franca then spoke about Harrison of Resurrection Island, involved with death and dark forces, searching for something across the Northern and Southern Continents, but she didn't mention Demon Warlock Burman-it was too easy to link that to the great adventurer Louis Berry.
In the sudden silence inside the palace, Franca shared her and Lumian's speculation, "Resurrection Island might be a nexus where the two worlds converge.
"We must find Harrison and get information about Resurrection Island from him!"
After speaking in one breath, Franca's gaze slowly moved from the somewhat dazed faces of the audience to Madame Hela nearby.
She noticed an indescribable emotion in the dark pupils visible behind Madame Hela's black latticed veil.

Chapter 755: Different Attitudes

Despite Madame Hela's usual restraint and calm, there are clear emotional ripples this time...

Franca thoughtfully withdrew her gaze.

By then, many members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society had regained their composure from the shock, voicing their opinions with both excitement and urgency.

Someone shouted, "Hidden Blade, you can't make such assumptions so lightly!"

Franca roared back immediately, "Whether or not Resurrection Island is a nexus between two worlds, we still need to find Harrison! This isn't a conclusion; it's a direction for our investigation!"

Another person yelled, "How can we find someone just based on a name?"

"I have his portrait!" Franca responded instantly.

As members expressed their expectations, posed questions, and sought answers, a voice, slightly out of control, shouted, "Why can't you just live peacefully in the present?"

Franca looked towards the source of the sound and saw a male member known as Mole.

After Mole spoke up, several members loudly said, "I don't want to risk everything for a slim hope."

"Why can't you give up these fantasies?"

"I have no interest in returning to our previous world!"

In response to the dissenting voices, Franca wasn't surprised but internally sighed, People vary so much when you gather a hundred of them...

She sincerely responded, "Searching for Harrison and verifying the situation on Resurrection Island are both entirely voluntary. Those who want to uncover the truth about our transmigration can decide if it's worth the risk. Those who aren't interested can continue as before, but please don't stop others from participating."

Mole and others were clearly still worried that investigating Resurrection Island might disrupt their current lives, but with Franca offering the choice of "free will," they could only mutter and retreat to the fringes.

Seizing the opportunity, Franca added, "For now, our investigation into Resurrection Island is limited to gathering information. Do not go looking for it-it's very dangerous. Once we obtain key information from Harrison, we'll discuss whether or not to go to the island and how to approach it. Right now, let me show you Harrison's portrait."

Cheers erupted from some of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members who had grasped the situation: "Hidden Blade is awesome!"
"Hidden Blade, I love you!"
"Praise be to Hidden Blade!"
Franca chuckled and tilted her head, her worries and fears somewhat alleviated by the emotions of the crowd.
She knew that these members were not without fear of the unknown results of the investigation and the potentially disappointing truths it might reveal, but they had waited too long and desired too much. Even a small glimmer of hope could temporarily relieve their pain and sorrow, releasing their excitement and joy.
Franca then took a deep breath, pulled out Harrison's portrait, and affixed it to the back of the massive stone chair.
"Everyone, take turns to come and take a look!" Franca called out, stepping back from the area around the speckled stone chair.
"Do you really think that's a nexus between two worlds?" Gandalf stopped Franca, asking fervently.
Franca smiled awkwardly. "It's just a theory, still."
Gandalf nodded with satisfaction.
"That's no problem. Make bold assumptions, but verify them carefully."
"What, in your opinion, is the relationship between Resurrection Island and our world?"
Franca asked Gandalf, both hopeful and nervous.
Gandalf chuckled. "I don't have any predetermined conclusions yet; I need more information to study."
Franca glanced around and lowered her voice.
She shared the existence of the Samaritan Women's Spring, Underworld Daoist, and Celestial Master with President Gandalf, whom she and Lumian had decided to inform before attending this meeting-previously, they had only shared this with Hela. After all, they had worked together in the real world before.
Gandalf listened attentively and made a judgment.
"The relationship between the two worlds might be closer than we anticipated.
"The phenomenon of transmigration may have started even earlier."
Before Hidden Blade Franca could respond, the president of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society mused to himself, "With so many signs and traces, it's incredible we haven't encountered them, while you frequently do."
This probably requires your praise for the True Creator.. Franca

barely held back a sarcastic remark.
After parting from the half-giant Gandalf, she was cornered by the tall 007.
"We've yet to find the person who might be Harrison," 007 simply reported on the previous "person-finding" efforts.
"Maybe he's no longer in Trier." Franca refrained from complaining about the Purifiers' inefficiency.
She glanced at "007" in lion headgear and cautiously asked, "Would you want to return to our original world?"
007 paused for a few seconds before replying, "Of course, but I'm afraid everything has changed.
"Although the era from which Emperor Roselle transmigrated isn't far from ours-if we returned now, we'd only miss a few days of life-no one has gone back yet, so we can't be certain. Maybe the rules for coming and going are fundamentally different."
Franca fell silent.
007 glanced at Gandalf sitting on the steps, scribbling in a notebook, and asked Franca, "What did you discuss with the president? He seemed quite stirred."
Franca, managing her emotions, took the opportunity to share with 007 what she had told Gandalf.
"007" AngoulÃªme was stunned for a moment, then clenched his teeth and said, "Why didn't you share this information sooner? What else haven't you told us?"
"I was just afraid you would really go all 007?" Franca joked, only to be met by a stern look from 007, which made her chuckle awkwardly. "Sometimes, it's not that I don't want to share; it's either not the right time or I don't have the permission."
I'm not Lumian, who has to squeeze out information like toothpaste-if I could tell, I would share everything... Franca added in her mind.
007 knew that Hidden Blade might have joined a secret organization and understood her predicament. He took a couple of deep breaths to calm himself.
He mumbled to himself, "You all have found so many traces of another world beneath Trier; I can't believe the two major churches that have watched over Trier for over a thousand years haven't discovered anything.
"When I become a demigod, a senior deacon, maybe I'll be allowed to look at those dossiers, right?"
"Mmm, mmm," Franca agreed repeatedly.
In the corner where the Academy group gathered, Professor, Associate Professor, Principal, Isotope and others had all viewed Franca's portrait of Harrison posted on the stone chair and were

eagerly discussing related matters.
A woman with the periodic table painted on her face in washable paints asked those around her, "If we really find a way and a path back to our world, would you want to return?"
Professor and Associate Professor looked at each other and said, "If we can bring our children without having to leave anyone behind, we definitely hope to go back."
Principal, suspected of being a Sanguine, laughed.
"If I could keep my Beyonder abilities, then I'd be willing to go back."
Isotope, with fake heads on each shoulder and wearing a mannequin headgear, chuckled.
"I have no attachments or affairs that a mere modern life could replace with the sense of accomplishment I've gained in this world; I don't want to go back."
"What about you, Muggle?" asked Periodic Table, turning to the quietly listening Lumian.
Lumian paused for a moment and said in the voice of Aurore, "That's the place I long for day and night.
"But I'd also like to take some people who are close to me with me."
After much discussion, the topics of "going home" and "Resurrection Island" finally cooled down, and as everyone naturally fell silent, Lumian lifted his beautifully curved chin and looked around, asking, "Does anyone know someone from the Moses Ascetic Order" Suddenly, most members of the Academy group turned their gaze toward Muggle, observing her rosy lips and pale skin exposed outside her hoodie.
"Why are you asking this all of a sudden?" asked Professor wearing a butterfly bow tie.
The Academy group had many Warlocks and had exchanged information about the Moses Ascetic Order, so it wasn't surprising that "Muggle" knew about this secret organization.
Lumian responded with a smile, "I want to pass a message to the Moses Ascetic Order that there's a traitor among them."
"A traitor?" Isotope and company listened, somewhat bewildered.
Without giving a direct response, Lumian said, "Have you heard of 'Mirror People'?"
According to Madame Hela's latest statement, the members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society who could enter the Nation of the Evernight through the spell were at most mentally disrupted or harbored corruption inside; it was unlikely that their life forms had changed without detection, so it could preliminarily be ruled out that there were any Mirror People lurking here.
"I've heard of it," said Professor in a black half-face mask, nodding

solemnly. "There have been occasional incidents of original hosts being replaced by their Mirror People, but why these Mirror People appear is still unknown, and perhaps the official Beyonders have the relevant information."
You seem to know quite a bit about the mystical world... Lumian's lips curled up with a smile.
"I know a Mirror Person named Griffith who has replaced his original host, and his host was a member of the Moses Ascetic Order; of course, Griffith certainly isn't the name he used in the Moses Ascetic Order."
Members of the "Academy" group remained silent, simply nodding their heads.
Lumian did not continue the topic.
Professor looked at her and ventured to ask, "Muggle, are you still in Trier?"
"Yes," Lumian responded with a smile.
Professor looked around and said, "I'm planning to organize a real-world gathering for members in Trier soon; do you want to join? It will primarily involve our Academy group."
Lumian's eyes flickered, and he smiled coyly. "Okay."

Chapter 756: "Farm" Team

After finalizing the details of the real-world gathering through Madame Hela's messenger, including the time, place, password, and method of the meeting, Lumian quietly listened to the members of the Academy group exchanging ideas, occasionally joining in the discussion.

With his current mastery of mysticism, he no longer needed to hide his ignorance.

After a while, Lumian asked if anyone had the potion formula and related ingredients for the Harvest Priest, but the answer was no.

He then walked over to another group near the ancient palace's gate.

Called the "Farm," it was a group of Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members who enjoyed planting and accumulating wealth. Lumian had once overheard their everyday conversations about how many hectares they had purchased, their plans to save for a ranch, their forest harvests, the effectiveness of their compost, the Church of Earth Mother's batch of modified wheat seeds suitable for arid regions, their growing savings, and how work brought them joy.

After that, Lumian never eavesdropped again.

As he approached the Farm members, he smelled the earthy scents of soil, fertilizer, grass, grains, and livestock—a familiar and comforting aroma that transported him back to Cordu Village, back to his sister's side.

The experienced Lumian instantly became alert.

This... reminds me of life in Cordu for one thing, but on another level, the acts of farming, herding, and harvesting resonate with the Omebella bloodline within me. The Goddess of Harvest is indeed living up to Her name; as expected of the Great Mother's Child of God...

Lumian quickly figured out the reason.

Although consuming the remnants of Omebella's umbilical cord hadn't enhanced his powers or abilities, it had attracted the Great Mother's gaze, allowing creatures She had created or blessed to sense his bloodline, though it hadn't been without effect.

Omebella's residual bloodline subtly altered his perceptions of certain things, indirectly affecting his psyche.

As Lumian listened to the Farm group members discussing, he keenly observed each person's reactions.

Although only creatures lacking necessary intellect would mistake him for a child of the Great Mother, those who had received the Great Mother's boons or were directly created by Her could sense

the Omebella bloodline in him, though they wouldn't misidentify him.
This would help Lumian determine through any unusual reactions among the Farm group members whether they covertly worshiped the Great Mother.
After a few minutes, Lumian tentatively confirmed that none of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members in this area were problematic.
He then mimicked Aurore's voice when she pressed her voice down, looked around, and asked, "Does anyone have the Harvest Priest's potion formula or related ingredients? If you're unwilling to disclose the formula, you could sell me a ready-made Harvest Priest potion."
"Muggle, I thought you were a 'Warlock,'" a Farm group member called "Breeder Master" asked, puzzled.
He was tall with a rugged, wild demeanor and wore a primitive tribal mask made from animal fur.
"I Know someone who needs it," Lumian laughed, "and I thought I might make a small profit while helping out."
Breeder Master further inquired, "You should know that a ready-made potion needs to be consumed quickly before it is absorbed by the container and becomes a Sealed Artifact with strong negative effects. Moreover, trading through Madame Hela's messenger would delay things. You have to drink it immediately upon receipt. Will there be no issues?"
Madame Hela's messenger sure is busy... Lumian teased inwardly.
"No problem."
After questioning and observing, he was sure that the Doctor potion from Lugano had been fully digested.
This was a Doctor who had treated an Angel and fake Angel!
After Ludwig was brutally beaten by Loki, it was Lugano who had treated and healed his wounds. Lumian himself had received Lugano's treatments on multiple occasions.
After contemplating for a moment, Breeder Master said, "20,000 gold risot for a ready-made Harvest Priest potion.
"It's pricier than just buying the ingredients separately, but we have to respect intellectual property rights. Normally, I'd charge between 30,000 and 35,000, but since we're all members of the society..."
About 40,000 verl d'or, Lumian nodded slightly in agreement.
"No problem."
He already had 19,000 gold risot in bills and coins on him, so he made an upfront payment of 10,000, agreeing to pay the balance upon receipt of the potion.

They brought in 007 from the Sanctuary group to notarize the agreement.
"Pleasure doing business," said Breeder Master with a smile to Muggle as he pocketed the deposit.
He then turned to other members of the Farm group and exclaimed, "Now I have the funds for more experiments! I've been studying those mushrooms created by the legendary Druid Frank Lee. I find his philosophy intriguing and worth following.
"Given the myriad supernatural beings in this world, including Beyonders, why not merge the blood, flesh, milk of these beings with ordinary plants? Whether through hybridization or genetic modification, with the aid of mystical powers, it can be done relatively easily, and after several generations, the traits stabilize, resulting in plants with magical effects but no Beyonder characteristics..."
As Lumian listened, a strange unease began to form within him.
He never felt this way even when discussing death-related topics with the Purgatory group!
The first time he heard the name Frank Lee was in the Cordu Village dream, where an official Beyonder named Ryan mentioned a saying that circulated at sea: "I'd rather come face to face with Pirate Admirals or even Kings than run into a bloke named Frank Lee."
Later, when Lumian was at sea, he heard no rumors about Frank Lee, nor did he know if Ryan was exaggerating in the dream or if those who knew of Frank Lee's deeds dared not or chose not to mention him again.
Sanctuary team.
Franca looked towards a member nicknamed "Someone" and asked with a smile, "Weren't you looking for the Marauder pathway Sequence 5 Dream Stealer's Beyonder characteristic? Still need it? I just got one from a friend.
"If you don't want it, I'll go to an Artisan to craft a mystical item with that Beyonder characteristic."
Someone, wearing an eyepatch-style black half-face mask, sized up Franca and replied, "It seems your friend isn't you.
"I don't need it anymore, but wouldn't mind another.
"One flat rate, 5000 pounds."
That's about 120,000 verl d'or... Franca laughed and said, "200,000 verl d'or, not a coin less."
"Someone" calculated for a moment and countered, "150,000 verl d'or at best, or forget it."
Franca thought for a few seconds and said, "You can pay in two installments, the first right now of 120,000 verl d'or, and the

second of 60,000 within three months of receiving the Beyonder characteristic, secured by 007's notarization to enforce the contract."
Someone paused to think, then asked with a smile, "Aren't you worried I'll default after getting the Beyonder characteristic? A Notary's notarization isn't foolproof, remember, I was once a renowned Swindler."
Franca smiled. "Who's better, you or Bard?"
Someone fell silent.
"Bard has already been dealt with by me and my comrades. Unless you're willing to give up a very useful trading platform over 60,000 verl d'or, I'm not worried about you defaulting, your Beyonder characteristics are also quite valuable." Franca, who had mafia ties, made her intimidating remark as casually as discussing what's for dinner.
"It won't be long before I surpass him," replied Someone after a few seconds, "Deal!"
"No rush," Franca said with a smile, "The final payment must be in gold."
...
In the following days, Lumian had no particular business and wandered around Trier, tracking several Mirror People and looking for Harrison's whereabouts based on intelligence provided by 007.
He was supposed to collect a reward from Mr. K, but his heart resisted, and he kept delaying.
Franca completed her transaction with Someone from the Sanctuary group, receiving a down payment composed of bills and coins totaling 5000 pounds.
She also gave Jenna 15,000 verl d'or in bills, stipulating that the remaining payment of 60,000 verl d'or in gold belonged entirely to her.
Jenna lost the Dream Stealer Beyonder characteristic but also paid off the 45,000 verl d'or she owed Franca, now possessing 16,000 verl d'or and gold Loen pound worth 120,000 verl dor.
She had never been so wealthy before.
She always knew that potion formulas and Beyonder characteristics were valuable and even knew their approximate price range, but she had never paid in full in one go nor truly sold any until now. Now she was experiencing what it felt like to earn money like the Pirate Hunter Gehrman Sparrow.
That evening, just as Lumian returned to his rented apartment planning to change his clothes and muster the courage to see Mr. K, the wall lamp in his room suddenly tinged with eerie green and pale colors.

They blended bizarrely together.
Then, Lumian saw his messenger, the mummified Penitent in a black clergy robe, emerge from the void.
Almost simultaneously, Madame Hela's messenger, a skull made of pure silver, appeared shrouded in darkness.
Shortly after, the silhouette of a doll messenger rapidly took shape.
"..." Lumian was somewhat stunned.
Would the messengers fight each other?
Do! have three letters?
One should be for the Harvest Priest potion, another likely a Sealed Artifact made from the Beyonder characteristics of Hisoka, but what about the third?

Chapter 757: Harvest Priest

As Penitent Baynfel and the pure silver skull appeared, the doll messenger, dressed in a pale gold mini dress, instantly floated beside Lumian as if confronting the other two messengers.

The pure silver skull set down a burlap bag on the desk from its mouth amidst the surrounding darkness, then fixed its burning pale eyes on Lumian.

Penitent Baynfel dropped a folded letter and silently returned to the spirit world, vanishing from the room.

Lumian wanted to take this opportunity to chat with his messenger about his past and ask about his relationship with the True Creator, but given the circumstances, he had to suppress his curiosity and focus on the pure silver skull instead.

Lumian picked up the burlap bag, which resembled a book bag, and pulled out an aluminum flask.

Behind him, the doll messenger floated closer, curiously looking on.

Lumian unscrewed the grayish-white flask to find a golden liquid inside, brimming with white foam.

If it weren't for the lack of a malty scent, he would have thought it was beer.

He took out a piece of paper from the burlap bag, written in ancient Feysac by Madame Hela: "It is indeed the Harvest Priest potion.

"It needs to be drunk within 15 minutes, or you will end up with a alcohol flask that could bring harvests."

Seeing that Madame Hela had helped with the identification and there was a notarized contract in place, Lumian immediately took out the remaining 9000 gold risot from his Traveler's Bag and the 1000 gold risot notes he had exchanged in the last two days.

"This is the final payment." Lumian put the gold risot into the burlap bag and handed it to the skull made of pure silver.

The pure silver skull bit down on the burlap bag, merged with the surrounding darkness, and disappeared in an instant.

Lumian then turned his head and said with a smile to the doll messenger, "What's your take?"

The doll messenger snorted.

"I will surpass them eventually!

"I will become the first, no, the second most powerful messenger in this world!"

"Quite ambitious," Lumian replied, half-seriously, half in jest.

He wasn't surprised by the doll messenger's response; he already knew about the special nature of Penitent Baynfel and the pure

silver skull.
The doll messenger then hurled a dark, translucent orb, resembling a crystal ball but more ethereal, towards Lumian, who easily caught it. Inside the bent, transparent barrier, a glossy black bone ring floated, its surface carved with the twisted, agonizing face of a demon, whose eyes contained two vague shadows.
After letting the folded letter fall to the surface of the desk, the doll messenger also left Lumian's room.
It is indeed a Sealed Artifact made from Hisoka's Beyonder characteristics... Lumian couldn't afford to check the artifact's effects and impacts right away, so he stored the dark transparent orb and the folded letter first, and then began to read the letter brought by his messenger.
The letter was very brief: "Seven of Wands: "Do you still remember your promise? We now need your help.
"If you don't have other important matters recently, please meet us at the following coordinates, where I will tell you the details."
"Knight of Swords."
Knight of Swords needs help... Lumian came to a realization.
In the incident of the sea prayer ritual, he had asked this Minor Arcana card holder, working under Ma'am Hermit, for help. At the time, he did not ask for a payment but mentioned that he might need a bit of help if he went to the Southern Continent, to which he readily agreed.
Fortunately, I'm relatively free lately. Lumian put away the letter from the Knight of Swords, screwed the cap back on the grayish-white flask, and walked out of the room with it in hand.
Lugano was cleaning up the plates and cutlery that Ludwig had left behind.
"Your Harvest Priest potion has arrived," Lumian stated calmly.
Lugano froze, a look of confusion washing over his face.
After a few seconds, he pointed to the flask in his employer's hand and asked, "This?"
"Yes, it looks more drinkable than the potions from the Hunter pathway," Lumian chuckled as he shook the flask. "You have ten minutes to decide whether you want to drink it."
"Ten minutes?" Lugano exclaimed, startled.
Lumian nodded.
"No, eight minutes.
"If you haven't made up your mind in eight minutes, I'll find a stray dog downstairs or catch a rat and feed it this potion."
"Don't I need to prepare mentally and physically?" Fear was written all over Lugano's face.
This seems too casual, doesn't it?

This is a potion, after all!
If his mental and physical state weren't right, he could either turn into a monster or die on the spot!
"Only seven minutes left now," Lumian reminded with a smile. "Your condition is fine; you just need to relax and remember that you are Ludwig's nanny and family doctor."
"Is that really okay?" Lugano still couldn't believe it.
"Six minutes," Lumian said coldly.
".." Lugano was stunned.
How could time pass so quickly?
Gritting his teeth, he replied, "Alright!
But I need to drink it in Underground Trier."
"Hmm?" Lumian raised an eyebrow.
Lugano quickly explained, "I feel that standing on the earth helps me maintain my state while drinking the potion."
"The Earth pathway, huh..." Carrying the grayish-white flask, Lumian turned and walked out of the room.
Lugano followed, pulling out a bunch of banknotes from his pocket.
"This is all my savings, 15,000 verl d'or.
"You said before, the rest would be covered by you."
Lumian nodded nonchalantly and accepted the 15,000 verl d'or without hesitation.
He still had 86,000 verl d'or, including a few coins and gold bars.
Once on the street, Lumian headed directly to the nearest entrance to Underground Trier. A stray dog passed by, barking as if to threaten them.
Lumian chuckled and "tested" Lugano, "Can you understand what it's saying?"
With his mind full of thoughts about the Harvest Priest potion, Lugano asked in astonishment, "Y-you can understand? Do you have a mystical item from a Beast Tamer?"
Lumian laughed to himself. "It says, 'I heard you're going to feed me a portion of the Harvest Priest potion; why haven't you given it to me yet?"
".." Lugano then realized his employer was joking.
On second thought, Lugano felt like he was being mocked by his employer.
He's implying that I'm a stray dog!
I was indeed wondering why he hasn't given me the Harvest Priest potion yet...
Once in Underground Trier, Lumian expertly navigated to a deserted tunnel and tossed the grayish-white flask at Lugano.
As Lugano fumbled to catch the flask, Lumian coldly reminded,

"Two minutes left."
Lugano took a deep breath, unscrewed the cap, and saw the potion inside that looked like beer.
He began to recall how he had cared for and treated Ludwig, using this memory to slightly relax his tense spirit.
After a few seconds and two deep breaths, Lugano raised the grayish-white flask and gulped down the potion.
Lumian, who made a ball of bright white flame as a light source, silently watched, observing the various changes in Lugano's body.
He had not forgotten that his "servant" was quite unusual; he could stay conscious during the Dream Festival!
Lugano's face quickly twisted in agony, as if experiencing the pain of Ludwig biting off his arm again.
Lumian saw his feet slowly sinking into the soil, the hairs on his exposed skin visibly thickening and lengthening, and his brown hair doing the same, his brown eyes losing focus.
After a while, the transformations stopped, and Lugano's expression gradually eased.
It went smoothly... He fits the Planter pathway well... I'm not sure if this is due to his own anomalies... Lumian muttered silently, watching as Lugano's eyes slowly regained clarity and reason.
He asked in a relaxed posture, "What abilities have you gained?"
Although it was frowned upon in the mystical world to inquire about the details of someone's Beyonder abilities, who could be blamed because the person across from him was his "servant"?
Lugano saw no problem with this, checking his condition while savoring the acquired mystical knowledge.
"My healing capabilities have expanded. I can now cure diseases in plants and fields...
"I can also catalyze seeds, making them grow or reproduce faster.
"This divides into two scenarios: the first is placing both hands on the earth, which allows seeds and plants within a thirty-meter radius to grow or reproduce much faster than normal, though not instantaneously complete their lifecycle from gestation to returning to the land in a few seconds or minutes. The second is directly holding some seeds or plants and fully catalyzing the life contained within them.
"The latter scenario allows me, in a very short time, to create a large amount of vines, which can be used to entangle and control enemies."
Hearing this, Lumian thoughtfully asked, "So you can only fully catalyze the life contained within plants, and it can't be used on humans?"
"No." Lugano shook his head.

Lumian continued, "If you encounter a creature that is essentially a plant but has intelligence, could you, by direct contact, cause all of its life to burst forth in seconds or tens of seconds, completing its entire life cycle?"
"First, I'd need to be able to touch it..." Lugano indicated that this was dangerous and not something he, not specialized in combat, could manage.
He added, "Plus, I'm not sure it would have the effect you're imagining."
Lumian nodded almost imperceptibly, signaling Lugano to continue.
Lugano gathered his thoughts and said, "If I could obtain seeds of different mutant plants, my catalytic abilities could play a significant role in combat.
"I can also command plants and insects within a thirty-meter radius to provide me with appropriate support, as long as it does not exceed their species limitations. However, intelligent ones won't work.
"I've also gained a few ritual spells, mainly for summoning rain or clearing the skies."

Chapter 758: Devil's Whispers

This really leans towards the concept of harvest... If I could obtain seeds from magical plants or be in an environment dominated by magical plants and special insects, the Harvest Priest's combative abilities using mystical means wouldn't be too bad; they might even be impressively effective...

The Beyonder ability to directly catalyze plants to unleash their full life force has vast imaginative possibilities. Unfortunately, a Harvest Priest's direct combat ability is limited. If Lugano were a Sealed Artifact and I were to use it, things would be completely different...

Amid these thoughts, Lumian looked at Lugano and asked, "Have there been any enhancements to your body?"

"There are some, but not many," Lugano replied honestly.

Lumian nodded and pulled out a letter from his pocket sent along with Hisoka's Sealed Artifact from Madam Magician, reading it with the aid of the bright white light orb floating above his head.

"Temporarily named: Devil's Whisper.

"Positive effects:

"1. Devil's Arm:

"To minimize the negative effects and make it easy to use, the Beyonder ability of this bone ring is reduced. Originally Devil Transformation targets the entire body, it now only affects the arm wearing Devil's Whisper.

"It causes the arm to swell, darken, and sprout sinister patterns, as if covered with a thick layer of armor. The flesh becomes highly elastic and resistant, minimizing damage.

"The arm in question becomes immune to most poisons, resistant to curses and fire to a certain degree, and significantly stronger.

"2. Malice Perception:

"For the same reason, Malice Perception granted by this ring only helps you sense whether people around you bear ill will towards you, not to detect looming dangers. Make do with it.

"3. Desire Incarnation:

"This is a power I specifically requested the Artisan to emphasize, sacrificing the chance to obtain other powerful effects. Moreover, to ensure its full manifestation, I agreed to slightly increase the rings negative effects.

"It can transform your body into a shadowy black liquid composed of various emotions and desires, helping you avoid damage, conceal your movements, and affect your enemies.

"This sounds quite useful, but is it worth my special request to the Artisan? You'll understand why once you use it."

Upon reading this, Lumian muttered to himself, 'So, by suppressing the reduced negative impacts of the first two positive effects, some of the impact has returned in the Desire Incarnation ability? *What makes it so special for Madam Magician to do this?*'
Lumian didn't rush to experiment and continued reading.
"4. Wraith Shriek
"By rubbing the demon relief on the ring's face and emitting a loud sound, you can create an effect similar to Wraith Shriek that can rupture the eardrums of living beings and harm their spirits. The closer they are to you, the better the effect.
"Negative effects:
"After wearing it, your malice will become more pronounced. If you can't control yourself and indulge in malice, you'll gradually slip into the Abyss and eventually be controlled by the malice of this ring, meaning, if you indulge in malice while wearing it, you will become its puppet, and it will be the driver, you the driven.
"While it's not that a single indulgence in malice will result in being controlled, it's hard for humans who have tasted the sweet lure of malice not to continue.
"According to my estimates, the conspicuous malice combined with the existing negative effects of the contract ability will negate all your endurance from Ascetic and your own willpower, making you unable to withstand further emotional and desire stimuli.
"Moreover, whether worn or not, just carrying it will cause your body to suffer burns from sulfur flames, both internally and externally. Placing it in the Traveler's Bag can effectively mitigate this effect. As a Pyromaniac who has reached Sequence 5, you can withstand these burns for a longer period, but be mindful of the sulfur's toxic effects and treat it promptly.
"Furthermore, including yourself, people within a hundred meters radius will be subtly influenced by the Devil's Whisper, more prone to ill thoughts and impulsive actions. This can also be mitigated by placing it in the Traveler's Bag."
The rest is okay, but after wearing Devil's Whisper, my emotions and desires will become my greatest weaknesses... Lumian assessed this Sealed Artifact from Hisoka.
Its sealing is relatively simple, requiring only spatial isolation. Combined with Lumian's strong endurance, he could totally use it as a mystical item.
Lumian then pulled out the pitch-black bone ring, wrapped in a dark transparent barrier, from another pocket. He pressed his hand against the sphere and slowly reached inside.
His right hand felt like it was moving through a dense swamp, struggling to touch the ring.

At the same time, the dark sphere silently crumbled, unfolded on its own, and merged with the surrounding void.
Lumian then slipped Devil's Whisper onto his left index finger.
His body suddenly liquefied and became ethereal.
He turned into a pool of thick black liquid. Lugano, who only glanced at him, shivered uncontrollably, chilled to the bone as if he had seen the most sinister and hidden desires and emotions deep within the human heart.
The newly-advanced Harvest Priest impulsively asked Lumian, who had just returned to human form from a black liquid state, "When can we return to the surface?"
Lumian gave him an icy glance, his blue eyes seemingly harboring a darkness that no light could penetrate.
Lugano shuddered violently, a familiar fear creeping back as he stuttered, "J-just asking."
Lumian cracked a slightly mad smile and slowly removed the Devil's Whisper, placing it back into the Traveler's Bag.
He now understood why Madam Magician had specifically requested this ability.
His desires and emotions were not entirely his own!
A smaller part of his emotions and desires stemmed from his fate linked to Termiboros, from the residual aura of the Blood Emperor, and from the bloodline of Omebella. Normally, these would only affect him, but using Desire Incarnation, these emotions and desires could be materialized and thus exert some influence on the outside world and his enemies.
If I were to envelop a Sequence 4 Saint in the Desire Incarnation form, that demigod would likely suffer from the corresponding emotional and desire corruption... But this method of attack means I'm forgoing evasion to face the backlash head-on, Lumian mused briefly, fairly satisfied with this Sealed Artifact.
Facing a demigod, evasion was sometimes futile-better to fight it out!
And both the Sword of Courage and Devil's Whisper gave him that chance.
When night fully descended, Lumian arrived at the headquarters of the Psychic magazine, located at 19 Rue Scheer in Avenue du Boulevard, and met Mr. K in the basement.
Mr. K, wearing a wide hood, warmly said, "Let us pray to the Lord first."
Lumian nodded slightly and closed his eyes.
His thoughts tightly wrapped, not drifting outward.
After a while, he and Mr. K opened their eyes simultaneously.
Mr. K, with a hoarse but fervent voice, said, "Congratulations, you

are now a candidate Oracle.
"This is the greatest reward, being closer to the Lord is the greatest reward for us!
"Afterwards, wherever you go, you can contact the local Oracles or members of the Aurora Order, followers of the Lord, to request their help.
"If there are no Saints or Oracles locally, you have the authority to call upon all resources there, including personnel, money, intelligence, and materials."
Is this the Aurora Order's reward, elevating my authority and status? Lumian made the sign of the cross over his chest and said in a hoarse voice, "Praise you for creating all. Praise you for bearing the world's sins!"
Mr. K nodded in satisfaction.
"There are no other rewards for now, let's continue to investigate the matter of the vortex."
"Okay," Lumian quietly breathed a sigh of relief.
If Mr. K had offered material rewards, he would have hesitated to accept them.
It's not that he was worried about the items themselves being marked by that entity; after all, he was already under surveillance, so a little more wouldn't make a difference. His reluctance was more psychological.
Lumian pondered for a moment and then informed Mr. K, "I might be heading to the Southern Continent again soon to wrap up some previous matters, not sure how long I'll need."
"Alright," Mr. K nodded gently, "Which area specifically?"
"Not sure yet," Lumian answered truthfully.
He really didn't know.
Mr. K didn't inquire further.
"We have Saints and Oracles on the Southern Continent, and many followers of the Lord operating secretly there. Once you determine the specific location, I can help you contact the person responsible for that area."
"Thank you, Mr. K," Lumian said, expressing his gratitude.
Mr. K corrected him, "No need for thanks; we are all Oracles now, not being equals is disrespectful to the Lord."
Lumian was momentarily speechless.
He casually asked, "Mr. K, that cathedral you took me to last time, does it have any significant meaning within our Aurora Order?"
Mr. K replied fervently, "That was the first cathedral established by our Aurora Order."
Is it related to Baynfel? Lumian asked a few more indirect questions from different angles, then took his leave.

Returning to Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, he informed Franca and Jenna about the Knight of Swords' request and then activated the black mark on his right shoulder, beginning the teleportation.

He moved between layers of pure color blocks and indescribable bizarre creatures, not knowing how long it took, but he finally arrived at the location indicated in the Knight of Swords's letter.

The first thing that caught Lumian's eyes were several pale-faced men and women, like bodyguards, surrounding the Knight of Swords with somewhat disheveled brown hair, a suppressed look in his eyes, dressed in a white shirt and black vest.

Chapter 759: Spiritual Intuition

Beside the Knight of Swords lay a boundless lake, its quiet crimson waters shimmering under the moonlight of the night, occasionally stirred by a breeze.

Lumian couldn't help but lift his head to gaze upward, feeling the night sky, hung with a crimson moon, seemed closer and much clearer than usual. Even the stars, obscured by the moonlight, were faintly visible, dense as if forming a brilliant, vast river.

A chilly wind blew past, and Lumian, dressed in a thick jacket, turned his attention back to the Knight of Swords and asked, "Aren't you cold?"

Although it was summer in the Southern Continent, their high altitude and thin air made it feel significantly colder, especially at night, with temperatures likely below 15 degrees Celsius.

Originally gazing at the highland lake, the Knight of Swords turned to Lumian and said, "For me, temperature has lost its meaning, and besides, the cold suits me better."

"Is that so? Then, extreme temperatures over 100 degrees Celsius or close to absolute zero don't affect you?" Lumian replied, his tone relaxed.

The Knight of Swords fell silent, his gaze dark, seemingly suppressing something, before Lumian steered the conversation back on track. "What exactly is the matter?"

Without asking the pale-faced, simply dressed men and women around him to leave, the Knight of Swords spoke in a low voice, "This is the Raklev area of the former Highlands Kingdom. I would like you to help find someone here."

The Highlands Kingdom, known for its mummies across the Northern and Southern Continents? Lumian did not hide his confusion. "What can you not find that I can?"

Having worked together before, Lumian knew that the Knight of Swords, a holder of a Minor Arcana card and a Sequence 5 Wraith of the Prisoner pathway-mainly controlled by the Rose School of Thought with its splinter group, the temperance faction, joining the Church of The Fool-must have his reasons.

Combining this information, Lumian guessed that the Knight of Swords was a member of the temperance faction, representing his faction within the Tarot Club, also serving Mr. Fool.

Moreover, having seen a temperance faction Angel suspected of being a messenger of Mr. Fool, Lumian knew this organization was not weak, but rather strong, especially in divination, endowed with potent spiritual intuition.

Considering these, if the Knight of Swords truly needed to find a

person, it would be simpler to request assistance directly from the temperance faction.
Is he thinking that it's a waste of my promise if it's not used?
Or, like me, do you prefer to rely on your own abilities and the goodwill you've accumulated to complete tasks, as a way to hone yourself?
Ah, it's more likely you're relying on my mystical ability to attract evil god bestowed to locate the target...
While Lumian made these guesses, the Knight of Swords, his voice suppressing his emotions and desires, said, "Someone's spiritual intuition tells her that you can solve our current problem and provide the most effective help."
A Wraith becomes a charlatan after becoming skilled at divination? Lumian thought sarcastically but didn't inquire further. "What do you need me to do?"
The Knight of Swords took a few steps forward.
"Please allow me to introduce myself.
"My name is Maric, the 'Knight of Swords' of the Tarot Club's Minor Arcana, and also a member of the temperance faction of the Church of The Fool.
"You're aware of the origin of the temperance faction aren't you?"
Lumian nodded and pointed at himself. "Lumian Lee."
The Knight of Swords continued, "We are looking for an important member of the Primordial Moon faction within the indulgence faction."
We... Lumian's first reaction was to look around for any companions the Knight of Swords, Maric, might have.
But he found no one.
As for the pale-faced men and women, he didn't use his Eye of Calamity, simply observing their weaknesses and confirming they were all zombies.
Lumian retracted his gaze and frowned.
"The Primordial Moon faction?"
Wasn't the Rose School of Thought only known for the split between the indulgence and temperance factions? *Where did the Primordial Moon faction come from?*
Hmm, from the series of events involving Hisoka and the Dream Festival, perhaps there was also a Devil faction within the Rose School of Thought...
Is this something learned from the Tamara family? Infinitely divisible...
The Knight of Swords earnestly explained, "The Primordial Moon faction joined the indulgence faction later, originally a branch of the Life School of Thought; they grasp the Apothecary, which is

also the Moon pathway. Later, guided by the Primordial Moon, they defected from the Life School of Thought and joined the Rose School of Thought.
Life School of Thought... Lumian's head throbbed.
Why does this keep getting more complicated?
And which secret organization is this now?
Seemingly sensing his thoughts, the Knight of Swords, Maric, spoke succinctly, "The Life School of Thought primarily follows the Fate pathway and is now an ally of the Tarot Club. This matter has nothing to do with our current search."
Lumian nodded, signaling the Knight of Swords to stick to the main issue.
Aurore once said, "Do not add unnecessarily entities; if irrelevant, best leave it be to save energy."
Glancing at the pristine, boundless lake, the Knight of Swords, Maric, said, "The member of the 'Primordial Moon' faction we're looking for possesses a very important item-that is our target."
"How are you so sure they are in, uh, the Raklev area?" Lumian engaged more seriously now.
The Knight of Swords paused for a few seconds before responding, "Two incidents here and some residual traces point to him, but we haven't found him yet. Meanwhile, another event occurred that proves he's still here, possibly right in Raklev City."
"Is he from the Apothecary pathway?" Lumian asked cautiously.
The Knight of Swords gave a slight nod. "Yes."
"Which evil god is their Primordial Moon?" Lumian didn't rush to ask about the incidents and the traces left behind.
The Knight of Swords' expression turned grave for a moment.
"It's likely an incarnation of the Great Mother, sometimes also known as the Mother Tree of Desire."
"The Great Mother..." Lumian's eyelids twitched, "Has the Primordial Moon's important follower received a boon from the Primordial Moon, or should I say, the Great Mother?"
"Possibly." The Knight of Swords wasn't too certain.
A follower of the Great Mother receiving Her blessing would mean they could sense my Child of God lineage within a certain distance... The Knight of Swords hadn't thought of asking for my help before; I had only recently received the lineage of Omebella, and his companion then had a strong spiritual intuition... Are they trying to lure out the target using my Child of God lineage? Lumian's understanding of the situation became instantly clear.
That person's spiritual intuition is spot on!
The Knight of Swords regained his composure.
"That person is named Oxyto, a Sequence 4 Shaman King of the

Apothecary pathway, a demigod. Don't worry, we will discreetly provide you with protection."
While speaking, the Minor Arcana card holder bent down to pick up an oil painting from the ground, depicting a handsome young man in his twenties, his skin pale as if he hadn't been exposed to sunlight for a long time, with deep features and slightly curly black hair cascading to his shoulders.
"This is a portrait of Oxyto," the Knight of Swords briefly introduced.
"If there's a boon, the target's current appearance and gender might be uncertain..." Lumian pondered aloud, "Tell me about the incidents that occurred in the Raklev area and the significant traces left behind."
The Knight of Swords pulled out a stack of papers from under his vest and handed them to Lumian, saying, "We first heard from some merchants about several occurrences of a full moon in Raklev City at times it shouldn't appear...
"At the edge of Lake Dalsh, we discovered a buried ritual site where dozens of humans had become nourishment for the earth. Their abdomens had been torn open, and it seemed something had crawled out, but no related traces were found at the scene..."
Hearing this, Lumian suddenly recalled several scenes he had seen in Madame Pualis's castle.
He grimaced as he asked, "Were these humans both men and women?"
"Yes," the Knight of Swords seemed to anticipate his question and added proactively, "The males' abdomens were also torn open."
He then pointed to the stack of papers in Lumian's hands.
"More detailed information is in the documents."
Lumian hummed in acknowledgment, pondering for a moment.
"I might need my companions to assist me, can you protect them too?"
"No problem, as long as you all stay within five kilometers of each other," the Knight of Swords assured.
Lumian smiled.
"Then I'll go back first to study the materials and make some preparations."
...
In the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702 on 9 Rue Orosai.
After listening to the Knight of Swords' request, Franca scratched her head, puzzled.
"Forget the risk of searching for a demigod for a moment; I think you alone should be able to handle it. There's limited help we can

provide, as we don't have the lineage of Omebella."
Anthony, who had been called over, thought for a moment and said, "I could help cover up traces of the investigation, making those questioned forget they were ever asked."
Jenna glanced at Lumian and said, "I think your real purpose isn't to get our help."
Hearing this, Franca realized.
"You want to use this opportunity to train the team? You want to prepare this early?"
"Not too shabby." Lumian chuckled, "The earlier you prepare for these things, the better, in case I'm forced to advance earlier than planned."
Franca thoughtfully said, "Then I'll pass Jenna's messenger summoning method to 007. When there are Mirror People clues, we'll go back to Trier to follow up. And don't forget the most important team member."
"How could I forget?" Lumian laughed.
Ludwig, who was enjoying a late-night snack, saw his godfather enter the room and sit down across the dining table, flashing a smile at him.
Suddenly, the bread in his hands didn't taste as good anymore.

Chapter 760: Second Day

In the Southern Continent, Raklev region, the day revealed Lake Dalsh in all its clarity, the serene waters reflecting the azure sky and distant snow-capped mountains in a scene almost dreamlike in its beauty.

Lumian, devoid of any mood to appreciate the scenery, was strolling around a pit at the forest's edge with Ludwig, who was smartly dressed in a tweed blazer, and Lugano, who wore a light cotton coat.

The pit contained highly decayed bodies, half-melted into the surrounding soil as if merging with it, decomposing in a unique way that returned nutrients to the earth.

Seeing this, Lumian understood why Oxyto, a Shaman King, didn't destroy the bodies after his rituals, leaving behind evidence and traces: burying the bodies and allowing them to return to the land was likely part of the ritual!

Last night, after reviewing the documents provided by the Knight of Swords, Lumian had a clearer idea of how to find Oxyto, a fervent disciple of the Primordial Moon.

Clearly, conventional methods like Magic Mirror Divination wouldn't work; otherwise, the Knight of Swords' companion, a member of the temperance faction with sharp spiritual intuition, would have already located Oxyto.

Lumian had three plans:

First, since Oxyto was a member of the Rose School of Thought and often mingled with the indulgence faction, he started by sending Franca and Jenna, both Demonesses, to casually stroll through Raklev City in full regalia, hoping to encounter Oxyto. This Shaman King, who never resisted his desires, might approach them, all under the watchful protection of the temperance faction.

Additionally, Anthony would use Psychological Invisibility or disguise himself as a commoner to follow them and observe the reactions of those around the Demonesses to discern any malice before Oxyto made a move.

Whether or not Oxyto had received the Great Mother's boons and transformed into a woman was a detail that didn't affect the Demonesses' ability to seduce him. Lumian deduced from Madame Pualis's and Franca's experiences that Oxyto would still be attracted to women, and might as well have an interest in men.

Second, using his own lineage from Omebella, and the unique ability of the Great Mother's blessed to sense others within a certain distance, he planned to roam the Raklev area in hopes of drawing out Oxyto. Similarly, Lugano, who also bore an anomaly

possibly linked to the Great Mother, would serve as excellent bait.
Third, he considered revisiting the sites Oxyto had been before to see what could be eaten.
Pinching his nose, Lumian carefully inspected the traces around and inside the pit along with the numerous bodies for a while, then turned his head to ask Ludwig, "Is it dirty?"
"Very dirty," Ludwig nodded emphatically.
"Dirty from the Great Mother?" Lumian pressed further.
Ludwig hummed affirmatively, his expression filled with conflict.
Unsurprisingly, he heard his godfather ask, "Is it edible?"
At this question, Lugano couldn't help but gag, while the usually stoic Knight of Swords, Maric, slightly raised his eyebrows.
Ludwig replied reluctantly, "Yes."
"Can you sense the child born from these corpses after eating?" Lumian further inquired.
Based on his experience, these bodies had likely been impregnated during the ritual, carrying rapidly growing clawed bird-like creatures in their wombs, which then tore through their parents' abdomens, absorbing the remnants and emerging on their own.
From a mysticism standpoint, whether voluntarily or forcibly, the clawed bird-like creatures and the corpses shared a deep blood connection, making it easy to trace one from the other, or even cast curses across distances.
However, according to the Knight of Swords' documents, divinations utilizing this blood connection had been fruitless, as if the creatures that had emerged from these corpses had vanished from this world.
This could be due to a high-ranking individual casting a counter-divination or a change in the creatures' state. Lumian's only hope was that Ludwig might glean different information by consuming the flesh.
Ludwig, with a sullen face, said, "You can extract a bit of the bloodline from the corpses through a certain cooking method. While this won't allow me to sense the child's position and condition from a great distance, I should be able to detect its presence within a thirty-meter radius."
"Okay," Lumian felt the results were better than expected.
Then, he watched as Ludwig squatted down and used a child's silver knife and fork to separate a piece of half-melted, half-rotten flesh from one of the corpses.
The flowing yellow pus and the grotesque state of the flesh made Lugano turn away, looking out towards Lake Dalsh and Raklev City on the other side of the water.
Ludwig then had Lumian retrieve a cast-iron skillet, a stand,

wheat flour, liqueur, various spices, and a chunk of solidified lard from the Traveler's Bag.
Lumian took on the role of the Chef's assistant, mainly responsible for starting the fire.
Ludwig first melted the lard, then added a bit of liqueur and some spices, frying them until the mixture was richly aromatic.
Next, he wrapped the rotten flesh in wheat flour and tossed it into the skillet, frying it in the deeply colored, fragrant lard.
The odors of fragrance and foul mingled together, gradually spreading.
Finally, Ludwig finished cooking and forked up the fried, golden-brown flour-coated meatball, stuffing it into his mouth.
He chewed, tears seemingly welling up in his eyes, looking pitiful as if wronged.
"You didn't complain when you ate Loki raw," Lumian joked.
Ludwig muttered as he spoke, "Rotten doesn't taste good, and there's no spirituality in it."
After swallowing the fried meatball that looked rather appealing, Ludwig continued thoughtfully as he savored it, "The deceased's birthday is on the second day of every year."
"Is there something special about that?" Lumian asked.
Stuffing candy into his mouth, Ludwig responded offhandedly, "In myths, on the first day, the Oldest One created the world; on the second, the Great Mother was born."
"I've never heard of such a myth..." Lugano murmured to himself, puzzled, with his back to Ludwig.
Lumian, deep in thought, shifted his gaze to another body.
"Their birthdays couldn't all be on the second day of each year, could they?
"I remember that the new year for many tribes on the Southern Continent isn't the same as on the Northern Continent; it's not necessarily January 1st. So, which day is the second day, and which calendar are we using?"
Ludwig, with candy in his mouth, said, "Any would do, as long as it's the second day of the new year according to the calendar one believes in."
Purely symbolic, then... Lumian turned towards the Knight of Swords. "Have you confirmed the identities and birthdays of these bodies?"
Raklev in the Star Highlands was a relatively prosperous area with a significant population, similar to the City of White Rapus, where Lumian had been before. It was one of the ancient Highlands Kingdom's support points ruling over the entire Star Highlands.
This area was known for its rich mines, but interestingly, all

mining sites were far from Lake Dalsh, preserving the sanctity of this highland lake in the hearts of its people.
In the past, the Star Highlands were primarily a battleground between the Intis Republic and the Feysac Empire. After the war a few years ago, the Feysac Empire's influence waned, and the Loen Kingdom began to extend its reach. Even the Evernight Goddess Church of Loen Kingdom seemed to be spreading its teachings in this area-a fact Lumian had heard about while in Rapus.
And throughout the Star Highlands, the city atop the mines, Raklev, had the largest Loenese population.
Knight of Swords Maric nodded slowly and said, "We've confirmed 90% of the bodies; their birthdays, according to the Northern Continent's calendar, are mostly on January 2nd. For the rest, using local calendars, their birthdays also fall on the second day of the new year.
"For those whose identities remain uncertain, they seem to be foreigners, who may have come here either voluntarily or involuntarily. Give us a bit more time, and we'll surely determine who they are."
With a sufficiently large sample, the findings mostly align with Ludwig's explanation that the ritual required a strong symbol of the Great Mother... Lumian didn't stop the more temperance faction members from wasting energy verifying the remaining deceased's identities-what if there was something else peculiar?
Looking across the lake at Raklev City, Lumian said, "Let's head back to the city now and walk around."
Let's see which of the three are more effective-Omebella's bloodline, the anomaly of the Earth pathway, or the blood connection with the bird-clawed babies!
Walking towards the city, made of numerous gray and white stone houses, along the shimmering lake as blue as the sky, Lumian suddenly had a thought.
He asked the quiet Knight of Swords walking beside him, "In the Rose School of Thought, was Oxyto in charge of the Raklev area?"
"Not previously, and now it's uncertain," replied the Knight of Swords succinctly.
Lumian nodded, musing to himself, "If he isn't in charge of Raklev and merely initiated a ritual here on a whim, he should have left after it ended. Why is he still here?
"Does he have a deeper purpose in the Raklev area?
"Or perhaps, the Rose School of Thought is planning something for this place?"
The Knight of Swords paused for a few seconds before responding, "We suspect there might be a deeper purpose."

Pausing momentarily, he added, "Before the Highlands Kingdom was established, many areas of the Star Highlands worshiped Death, and Raklev was one of the places most influenced by this belief. Even today, some local customs still carry remnants of this death worship."

As they spoke, the three adults and one child arrived outside Raklev City.

Raklev, compared to the refined City of White Rapus, the architecture here was much more rugged. Although there were people in dark red robes and bright dresses, most wore more durable canvas work clothes.

Before even reaching the city gates, Lumian could already sense the hustle and bustle.

Chapter 761: The Blessings Festival

Beside a segment of the old city wall, now merely a relic for admiration, Lumian's gaze passed between the tall and short gray-white stone buildings and landed on a majestic temple standing near the mountain range.

It towered thirty meters high, made up of several turrets, reminiscent of an ancient war fortress left over from bygone eras.

At this moment, influenced by both the mountains and the clouds, the near-noon sunlight cast a dim hue, cloaking the grand temple in a dusk-like veil.

"Is that a temple of the God of Combat?" Lumian didn't turn his head as he asked the Knight of Swords beside him.

The God of Combat Church was the only state religion of the Feysac Empire, but following their defeat in the war a few years ago, the Evernight Goddess Church had gained a certain right to preach within the empire, although they seemed unenthusiastic about this role.

The Knight of Swords replied succinctly, "It's a cathedral."

Not a temple, but a cathedral? True to the Feysacians, who suffer from a fascination with enormity, and their taste is not bad... For some reason, Lumian suddenly recalled a phrase he had heard at the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society: More is beautiful, bigger is better.

He then asked, "Is this a Feysac colony?"

"Yes," the Knight of Swords replied in a deep voice, "but now, the Loenese have the right to trade here."

Lumian nodded slightly, saying nothing further as he followed the road into Raklev City.

Along the way, it was easy for him to distinguish people from different countries among the crowd:

The Feysacians, tall in stature-men typically over six feet three inches, women nearly six feet-matched Lumian's stereotype of them: descendants of giants, even including many half-giants. Their dressing tended to be casual, with either unbuttoned jackets or no jackets at all;

The Loenese, predominantly with black hair, cared much about their appearance, always impeccably dressed. The ladies favored round-brimmed bonnets and carried sun-blocking parasols, while the gentlemen were decked out in top hats and carried canes;

The locals of Raklev were darker-skinned and wiry. The men often wore durable canvas work clothes, and the women dressed for labor, with only a few in brightly colored dresses, herding cattle, sheep, and horses.

Lumian watched a dwarf horse and several long-haired cattle pass by, spotting a local man in a dark red robe with a stark white skull topped with a wool-knit gray and white hat on his head.
"Is this the remnant of Death worship you mentioned in the local customs?" Lumian didn't choose his path deliberately but followed his instincts.
The Knight of Swords nodded slightly and said, "Yes, the people of Raklev keep the skulls of their deceased relatives at home, believing they protect them, bring good luck, and help fend off dangers lurking in the night. The more skulls a family has, the more prosperous and developed it is considered."
This is similar to the practice in Cordu where relatives' hair and nails are kept... but here, the Death worship is much stronger, hence the choice of skulls, making it more extreme...
Lumian suddenly felt a pang of melancholy.
The Knight of Swords continued, "Some even make amulets from the skulls of their deceased kin to carry with them at all times. What you saw earlier was just such a case.
During the annual Blessing Festival, all the locals in Raklev take the skulls from their homes into the streets, dress them solemnly, and join in the revelry and prayers together."
"Blessing Festival?" Lumian perked up, asking with gravity.
Having experienced Lent, Sea Prayer Festival, and Dream Festival, he felt like he had developed a sort of festival-induced PTSD, with a headache starting whenever he heard of another special day.
Oxyto, a Shaman King of the Rose School of Thought and a key follower of the Primordial Moon, couldn't be staying in Raklev just for the Blessing Festival, could he?
The Knight of Swords responded somberly, "The Blessing Festival has long since passed; it was in November last year, more than a month before the Dream Festival."
You know about the Dream Festival... Lumian first breathed a sigh of relief, then asked anxiously, "Did Oxyto first appear in the Raklev area before or after the Blessing Festival?"
The Knight of Swords thought for a moment before replying, "Before."
"So during the Blessing Festival, he was likely still in the Raklev area?" Lumian furrowed his brow slightly.
"That seems to be the case," the Knight of Swords answered, very cautiously.
...
Franca's gaze drifted away from a local woman with colorful skulls sewn onto her shoulder, and she turned to a tall, blond, blue-eyed woman from Feysac with a smile. "Sorry, I already have

a lady companion!"
Isn't this Feysacian a bit too forthright?
Flirting with me and Jenna, and to think, aside from men, there were also beautiful women inviting us over!
The Feysacian chuckled. "I don't mind if you both come over to my place."
"I mind," Jenna spoke up for Franca.
They had been wandering around Raklev City for nearly two hours. Although Franca hadn't actively unleashed the Demoness of Pleasure's charm-to avoid suspicion of fishing purposefully-their carefully styled Demoness appearance alone, in terms of looks, demeanor, and figure, was enough to draw plenty of attention.
Here, the Feysacians were bold and direct, both men and women, while the Loenese were conservative and reserved, only daring to approach after finding a good reason. The locals mostly just watched from a distance, quietly following, with a few gathering the courage to speak up, but only in the guise of offering guidance.
"Alright then." The female Feysacian, a bit taller than Franca, waved her hand in disappointment and turned to enter a nearby café.
Franca and Jenna were now in the heart of Raklev City, on a street that boasted the grand and elegant architectural style typical of Feysac.
"It's almost noon, how about trying some Feysac cuisine?" Franca looked up at the sun, bright but not warm.
She was referring to the St. Millom Restaurant diagonally across from them.
St. Millom was the capital of the Feysac Empire, and naming a restaurant after it seemed an attempt to offer an "authentic" experience.
"Sure." Jenna nodded gently.
As the two Demonesses stepped into the grand and intricately decorated restaurant, Anthony sat down on a bench across the street and quietly started on his lunch-a corn tortilla wrapped around beef and lamb, seasoned with various spices.
...
Lumian walked with Ludwig and Lugano until they reached the temple-like Holy Lake Cathedral.
But once they truly entered the city, the Knight of Swords, Maric, disappeared. However, Lumian's instincts told him that this Minor Arcana card holder was still nearby.
"Feeling anything unusual?" Lumian inquired of Ludwig.
"No," Ludwig shook his head.
Lumian then turned to Lugano. "What about you?"

"Me?" Lugano looked baffled.
Isn't it Ludwig's job to locate people?
What does this have to do with me?
"Do you sense anything unusual?" Lumian calmly repeated the question.
For some reason, Lugano felt that his employer had become more approachable lately, so he honestly replied, "No."
Gurgle, gurgle, a strange noise sounded next to both him and Lumian.
Both turned their gaze to Ludwig.
Touching his stomach, Ludwig looked eager and said, "It's time for lunch."
"Alright," Lumian agreed readily.
His philosophy was to never let a child go hungry, especially since the starving child might resort to cannibalism.
He looked around and pointed towards a bustling street to the northwest of Holy Lake Square. "There seem to be quite a few restaurants there."
This time, Ludwig didn't need Lugano's hand-holding; he scampered ahead with short strides, while Lumian followed at a leisurely pace, and Lugano trailed close behind.
The street bore a very typical Feysac characteristic, complete with trees and benches, resembling a streetscape in the Northern Continent countries.
Lumian glanced around briefly and pointed with his chin to St. Millom Restaurant not far away. "Let's try some Feysac cuisine."
"Okay." Ludwig wiped his mouth.
Suddenly, his eager expression turned to confusion, and his head moved left and right as if searching for something.
Lumian noticed this unusual behavior.
"Why? Want an ice cream too?" he teased Ludwig.
Imitating Lugano's usual demeanor, Ludwig pressed his voice down and said, "I think I sensed that child from the body, but it's vague."
Sensed the bird-clawed baby? Lumian looked around; there were no other children in sight, just Feysacians and locals, with a few from Loen scattered among them.
There weren't even any pregnant women around.
Then, Ludwig added, "I can't sense it anymore."
Had it moved beyond a thirty-meter range? Lumian thoughtfully withdrew his gaze.
If what we had just encountered was related to the bird-clawed baby, then my own Omebella bloodline might have been sensed by the other...

Lumian nodded and smiled at Ludwig. "Let's eat first, nothing's more important than filling our bellies."
"Right!" For the first time, Ludwig felt that the godfather's words resonated deeply with him.
Upon entering St. Millom Restaurant, Lumian immediately noticed Franca and Jenna sitting in a conspicuous spot.
The carefully dressed Demonesses caught Lumian's attention for an extra second.
Meanwhile, he wondered to himself, Is this the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence?
How coincidental for us to choose the same restaurant...
(Reader note: A reasonable development)
Franca and Jenna, noticing his gaze, looked back at him-one with a mouth agape in surprise, the other stifling a laugh.
They quickly composed themselves and turned their attention back to the beet soup in front of them.
With the waiter's guidance, Lumian, Ludwig, and Lugano took a seat in the corner.
"Sir, what would you like to order?" The waiter offered a menu designed like a book.
Lumian glanced at it, chose not to browse through, and simply said, "One set of everything but the drinks."

Chapter 762: The Flirting Showcase

Although limited by the variety of local ingredients, St. Millom Restaurant's menu appeared thick, yet it didn't offer an extensive variety of dishes. However, relatively speaking, a whole book's worth of menu items couldn't possibly be too few–it was enough to make a dozen adults feel stuffed.

The restaurant's waiter was a local, but he spoke fluent Feysacian, Loenese, and Intisian,

completely understanding Lumian's order without any confusion.

He was about to double-check when he saw the customer from Intis bring out a thick stack of gold hoorn.

This was the currency of the Feysac Empire, commonly used in the Raklev area–before teleporting to the Southern Continent that morning, Lumian had specifically gone to a nearby bank to exchange some cash at a higher rate of 4.4 verl d'or for one gold hoorn, but the cash he now produced wasn't his own; it was activity funds provided by the Knight of Swords, Maric.

"All of it?" The waiter, diligent and thorough, made one last inquiry.

"All of it," Lumian confirmed, earning Ludwig's approval.

After a while, dishes like beet soup, red wine beef stew, cream-fried cod, caviar, grilled meat skewers, appetizer salad, thick-cut steaks, and Feysac pies were served one by one.

Ludwig was utterly immersed in a sea of flavors, and Lumian, too, let himself indulge.

As a Sequence 5 Reaper, his appetite was already not small, and similarly, Harvest Priest Lugano, starting as a Planter, was eating more and more.

After nearly filling their stomachs, as Lumian savored the salty, fishy burst of the caviar in his mouth and awaited the arrival of dessert, he pondered over the recent events.

Why did Ludwig just vaguely sense the presence of the bird-clawed baby, and then in the blink of an eye, it vanished?

Could it be that we were exactly thirty meters apart, and just one step further would break the range of perception?

This is too coincidental... If it were arranged, they would have let Ludwig keep sensing it...

If Ludwig could sense the bird-clawed baby, could the baby also sense its 'mother' approaching? Did it detect the deceased 'mother' appearing in an unnatural way and immediately leave the area or hide, severing the connection between them?

This explanation is more reasonable, not reliant on coincidence...

Now the question arises, if it wasn't a coincidence, why did the

bird-clawed baby appear on this street?
It couldn't possibly just be passing by and happened to bump into us, right? If it truly is the law of convergence, it's still unclear whether it's due to a bloodline connection or a law of repulsion...
Lumian picked up the napkin that was on his lap, folded it neatly, and stood up, pushing the stack of gold hoorn to Lugano.
"I'll take a walk nearby to see if there's anything worth buying; you take care of Ludwig and remember to pay for the meal."
"Sure," Lugano was happy to remain seated without moving.
Lumian left St. Millom Restaurant with a leisurely gait, taking in all the shops and pedestrians along the street.
There were banks, candy stores, cafés, and shops selling Feysacian imported goods, with no suspicious individuals in sight.
The passersby were mostly Feysacians and Raklev locals, the latter often carrying talismans made from their relatives' skulls-some wore them as hats, others strung them into necklaces, and some sewed them onto their clothing at the shoulder.
It is not apparent who might attract the bird-clawed baby and its associates here, nor which building might harbor something unusual... Lumian pondered as he walked along the street, hoping for a "chance encounter."
Unfortunately, this did not happen.
Finally, he finished his stroll along the street and returned to St. Millom Restaurant.
The two Demonesses leisurely enjoyed a lavish Feysacian meal, their prominent position and striking looks drawing the gaze of everyone who came and went. Some even made a point of passing by their table repeatedly.
Lumian took the opportunity to admire the Demonesses' beauty.
Suddenly, a thought struck him:
Ludwig only sensed the bird-clawed baby near St. Millom Restaurant...
Franca and Jenna were right here in the restaurant...
Could it be that they truly attracted the attention of Oxyto, the Shaman King, who personally brought or sent the bird-clawed baby to track them, looking for an opportunity to strike?
Upon discovering the scent of a deceased 'mother' on Ludwig and sensing my Child of God bloodline, did Oxyto abandon his original plan, temporarily leaving this area or completely hiding?
This logic flows smoothly; there's no issue, but how could the guardian demigod of the temperance faction completely miss Oxyto's presence?
A Shaman King is adept at concocting various magical agents and conducting rituals, perhaps using one to evade normal

premonitions and intuitions?
Or could it be some other method?
Lumian quickly reviewed the intelligence provided by the temperance faction about the Shaman King.
His steps slowed, seemingly captivated by the beauty and charm of the two Demonesses, reluctant to look away.
After analyzing the information on the Apothecary pathway up to Sequence 4 Shaman King, Lumian considered that Oxyto might have also received a boon, transitioning to female, and he recalled the information he knew about the Heretic Spellmaster pathway.
In a flash of thought, a term came to mind: Paramita!
(Reader's Note: Sequence 4 of the Villain Pathway (boon) allows you to establish a new small world called "Paramita". In this world, when humans die, their souls return to the earth and roam the wilderness. On special occasions, they can return home, be reborn and emerge from the Mother's womb as human foetuses. Also, this sequence turns you into a woman.)
Paramita exists in its own right, dependent on the land, and its activities cannot be detected from the outside...
Did Oxyto use some application of Paramita to evade the gaze of the temperance faction's demigod and follow Franca and Jenna undetected?
Hmm, were those bird-clawed babies taken into Paramita after they crawled out of their 'mothers'?
With Paramita clearly involving the domain of death, were these 'mothers' dead before the bird-clawed babies tore out?
In that case, from birth, they bear a strong taint of death, seamlessly blending into Paramita...
Just now, Paramita was unfolding, watching Franca and Jenna, waiting to make a move, and upon sensing the presence of the deceased 'mother' and the bloodline of a Child of God,
Paramita immediately retracted, cutting off this close connection?
No wonder Ludwig's sensing of the bird-clawed baby was so vague... it was because it was inside Paramita!
Moreover, the local Skull Blessing Festival clearly reveres death, which can be linked to Paramita... Could Oxyto's deep-seated purpose for coming to the Raklev region be hidden in this?
With his speculation, Lumian approached Franca and Jenna's table with a genuine smile and politely asked in Intisian-like any real Intisian would do,
"May I have the honor of sitting here for a few minutes, beautiful ladies?"
Franca replied in amusement, "Are you also from Intis?"
She knew Lumian's approach wasn't simply to chat her up; he

must have another purpose, so she played along very cooperatively.
"Yes, which is why I felt a connection as soon as I saw you," Lumian fully utilized the pickup lines he'd learned from everyday life in Trier.
At a nearby table, several men who were covertly listening in thought simultaneously:
Damn Intisians!
Curse those Intisian playboys!
Jenna's response was natural, tinged with a hint of wariness and surprise. "Are you here in Raklev for travel or business?"
As she spoke, Jenna signaled the waiter, who brought over a chair for Lumian beside their table.
Lumian sat down and said to the two Demonesses, "Your beauty is like something out of a dream. No, even in my dreams, I haven't seen anyone as beautiful as you. You must have caught many an eye along the way?"
Dammit, these sweet nothings are giving me goosebumps! At this moment, Franca would have preferred if Lumian mocked her.
Of course, she was still secretly pleased; after all, she had heard from Browns Sauron that every Demoness who had transitioned from male would have a bit of narcissism-fond of and proud of her feminine self.
Jenna felt both discomfort and amusement, much like encountering a pretentious drunkard while playing a Witch.
Her acting was good; she showed no oddity and smiled mockingly. "Really? Would you dare to look into my eyes and say that again?"
Seeing the handsome young man genuinely sit beside the beautiful ladies and engage in pleasant conversation, seemingly stirring emotions, the surrounding men lamented, *How can they be so superficial, only considering looks?* That's how you get deceived!
Lumian laughed, looking into Jenna's eyes and said, "The moment I saw you, I knew what true beauty was."
"..." How can this guy say such things without feeling nauseous? Jenna avoided Lumian's gaze, answering his earlier question, "You know, some gazes make one feel uncomfortable."
"Any gaze more peculiar than others?" Lumian asked with a smile.
Franca, understanding what he was probing for, shook her head. "No."
Lumian nodded pensively.
"The weather here is rather cold; did you feel something similar earlier?"
Franca recalled for a moment, pursed her lips, and said, "It started

a bit on Chapin Street and lasted until just before the beet soup was served; the soup was warm and made us no longer feel cold."
Paramita that involves the realm of death made the surroundings feel a bit colder? Lumian said with a smile to Franca, "Perhaps that's the lack of a reliable man's warmth."
Franca's face twitched, and she communicated with Lumian using her eyes and lips.
Please, no more playing the playboy!
As the three conversed, the image of a woman wearing a petite black cap and light golden bun appeared faintly on the surface of a gold-leaf mirror embedded in the wall.
She rested her chin in her hand, her gaze occasionally focused on Lumian and Jenna, then shifting between Lumian and Franca, and assessing Franca and Jenna.

Chapter 763: Folklore Origins

Lumian "kept his promise" and sat at the table with the two Demonesses for only a few minutes before politely taking his leave, leaving the nearby men somewhat perplexed and puzzled.

Shouldn't he have seized the opportunity to pursue further?

Could this be the advanced technique of an Intisian playboy and Dandyist?

Walking back to his own table, Lumian saw waiters carrying a towering stack of plates, their faces a mix of confusion, shock, and fear as they walked away.

All the dishes on the menu had really been devoured!

The look in their eyes towards Ludwig and Lugano was as if they were staring at monsters who had crawled out of the abyss.

If you knew that two-thirds of those dishes and mains were consumed by Ludwig, and Lugano and I only shared the remaining third, you'd be even more scared, worried you might be eaten too.

Well, that worry would be justified... Lumian muttered silently as he sat down.

Before him, Ludwig, and Lugano, there was now a slice of apple cake and a cup of richly flavored ice cream.

Ludwig's face was unmasked in satisfaction, the most fulfilled he had felt in a long time.

This was not only because the Feysacian meals were generous in portion and tasty but also because it didn't hurt Lumian to spend someone else's money.

Lumian pushed his slice of apple cake towards Ludwig and appeared to concentrate as he scooped up the milky ice cream with a spoon and placed it in his mouth.

As he savored the melting frost and the spreading taste of milk, he whispered to himself, "Have any of you noticed anything unusual around Two of Cups and Seven of Cups?"

After a brief silence, a faint, ethereal voice echoed in Lumian's ear.

It was from the Knight of Swords Maric.

"We did notice something, from Chaban Street until you approached St. Millom Restaurant, but only a slight abnormality was detected, and we couldn't pinpoint its origin."

This matches Franca's description and my speculation, confirming each other... The temperance faction's demigod is unable to catch Oxyto even though they have started tracking Franca and Jenna... *Can we only wait for Oxyto to make a move?* Lumian thought for a few seconds and pulled out a pair of non-prescription, plain gold-rimmed glasses for disguise from his Traveler's Bag, placing them on his nose.

He immediately saw the image of the Knight of Swords dressed in a shirt and vest highlighted in the lenses, then disappearing.
The voice of Maric became clearer.
"We occasionally find such slight abnormalities and corresponding traces too, and that is also one of the main reasons we are sure that Oxyto is still in the Raklev area."
Can Paramita alone achieve this, managing to move undetected under the nose of a demigod with strong spiritual intuition? Lumian, lacking a deep understanding of Paramita, could only speculate based on his past experiences.
He had entered Paramita more than once!
In Cordu, whether in reality or in dreams, he had entered Paramita several times, but at that time, without high-level forces involved, he couldn't judge the normal state of Paramita and whether it could deceive a demigod's senses and intuition when it unfolded; In Trier, during the Tree of Shadow catastrophe, he was involuntarily drawn into Lady Moon's Paramita, which effectively isolated the inside from the outside, preventing Trier's demigods from detecting the growth of the Tree of Shadow and the fighting in that area. It was only through Franca's use of the Judgment card and the unique properties of Madam Judgment that they managed to establish a connection with the outside world, allowing the Tarot Club's demigods to pinpoint and descend into Paramita. At that time, the demigods of Trier were far from Rue Anarchie, unaware of anything hidden there, which could be understood and accepted...
Memories flashed through Lumian's mind, and he always felt that Paramita could not reach the current extent.
When Paramita closed, it was normal that the temperance faction's demigod couldn't sense it even if nearby, but how could it remain undetected after unfolding right under the nose of the temperance faction's demigod?
Is it that powerful?
I think even Lady Moon's Paramita couldn't achieve that, only capable of masking activities and protecting itself through distance from being detected...
Lumian turned his gaze to the window, seeing two locals among the passersby; one had a human skull painted purple hanging on his chest, and the other tied a bleached white human skull on top of his head.
Death worship...
Paramita...
Perhaps, Shaman King Oxyto has developed a special aspect of his Paramita in the Raklev area, which allows him to unfold it in front

of a demigod without being detected, at least until there's substantial interaction... Lumian speculated, piecing together Madame Pualis's plan to use the folklore of Cordu to enhance her own Paramita.
Lumian took another spoonful of milky ice cream and lowered his voice again.
"Tell me more about the origins and circumstances of the Skull Blessing Festival."
Knight of Swords Maric replied clearly in his ear, "It dates back to the fall of Death, when the situation on the Southern Continent fundamentally changed.
"The fall of Death caused disturbances in the Underworld, leaving most spirits unable to sense or enter it, forced instead to wander its periphery, between the spirit world and the real world.
"As a result, when sentient beings die, they are very likely to become undead, wraiths, or evil spirits-a grave threat to the living, leading to one disaster after another.
"The response of the Northern Continent nations has been Church-sanctioned purification combined with compulsory cremation. Here, the Eternal Blazing Sun Church and the God of Combat Church have had notable success with purification, making cremation unnecessary for those who have been purified."
Hearing this, Lumian truly understood and appreciated the various measures taken before and after death, including consoling the dying, purifying the dead, encouraging cremation, and rewarding the discovery of deceased vagrants.
The origins of all these practices was the fall of Death and the subsequent anomalies in the Underworld!
No wonder the old bones in the lower layers of the underground tombs are still bones, not ashes... During the Fourth Epoch, the Underworld hadn't yet been disturbed, and the spirits had a place to return to... Some mysticism knowledge suggests that bodies are prone to transform at the end of the Fourth Epoch during the Pale Disaster, caused by Death's invasion of the Northern Continent. Indeed, it is the legacy of the Pale Disaster; Death perished during that disaster, leading to the anomaly in the Underworld... Lumian suddenly realized, gaining a deeper understanding of certain mysticism knowledge.
The Knight of Swords continued, "The same issues arose on the Southern Continent, but the Balam Empire, home to many Beyonders following the Death pathway, swiftly devised several solutions that quelled the undead outbreaks in certain areas without resorting to mandatory cremation, thus restoring normalcy.

"In other regions, however, due to ongoing independence efforts from countries like Haagenti, Paz, and the Highlands, faith in Death began to wane, leading to a period of rampant undead plagues and a power vacuum. The people in these areas had no choice but to fend for themselves."
Lumian nodded slightly.
"Is the Skull Blessing Festival a solution for the Raklev area?"
"The Skull Blessing Festival is just one manifestation," explained the Knight of Swords simply. "According to records left by the Highlands Kingdom, it appears that the people of Raklev, with the help of a former official from the Balam Empire, established a mini-state for the spirits, allowing the dead to enter and rest there without emerging again.
"However, this isn't the Underworld; it cannot truly offer rest, nor can it completely bind the spirits. They just have to gradually fade away.
"The annual Skull Blessing Festival is a day for the spirits to emerge, revel, and be liberated.
Keeping the skulls of loved ones at home helps to protect the family from any spirits that might stray from this mini-state, preventing them from causing harm."
In essence, they created a rudimentary, localized version of the Underworld for spirits to return to...
A place to return to... The concept of Paramita is similar, where souls return to the earth and wander the wilderness...
Moreover, in Paramita, spirits can return home on special days to enjoy the joy of reunion, much like the Raklev area's Skull Blessing Festival...
The only difference is that here, the spirits have no path to rebirth; they can only slowly fade away... Lumian compared the local state for the deceased to Paramita and grasped something subtle.
He recalled something Louis Lund once relayed from Madame Pualis: What's been established is merely a small, caricature Paramita, a part of the complete Paramita...
Hmm... Lumian inhaled sharply, muttering under his breath, "Could Oxyto be planning to merge this local spirit realm into his own Paramita, to make it more complete?
"Has he, no, she already partially succeeded, which is why you haven't detected her?"
Knight of Swords Maric paused for a moment before responding, "It's a possibility."
After a brief pause, he added proactively, "We also haven't seen that spirit realm."
Seen... Lumian was initially startled but then understood what the

Knight of Swords meant.
The Prisoner pathway could directly turn into wraiths, and they should have been able to see the spirit realm, but they found nothing in Raklev this time.
Lumian didn't respond but considered another issue.
If Oxyto has indeed begun to merge with that mini-spirit realm, she essentially becomes a local version of Death, and she must have sensed the Omebella bloodline in me...
What would her reaction be?
Instant anger, or seeing it as something to be exploited?
Why didn't she act directly? Right, she also used the bird-clawed monster baby to discover that Ludwig nearby had the aura of a corpse 'mother,' adding up to what clearly looked like bait, obviously a trap!
That's why she, accustomed to indulgence, held back. *What she needs to do now is, seek assistance?*
With that thought, Lumian removed his glasses and abruptly stood up.

Chapter 764: There´s Always a Corruption That Can Be Used

Lumian took off his glasses and whispered, "The target should have noticed something unusual about me, but Ludwig is right beside me, giving off the 'mother' aura from that corpse. With both of these factors together, the target will surely be highly suspicious and may seek assistance. Be prepared."

If it were just the Omebella bloodline alone, Oxyto might think it was merely the law of convergence at work, bringing the blasphemer of the Child of God into her presence.

Similarly, if it were just the 'mother' aura from the corpse, she might become wary or suspect that the corpse's return to the earth had contaminated the local water, leading to the corruption of certain individuals.

But put together, anyone who could sense these would immediately see there was a big problem.

This couldn't just be a coincidence; there was clearly a dangerous trap!

Knight of Swords Maric's voice seemed to come from farther away. "We're already ready."

Sensing the hidden danger and preparing even before I thought through everything and issued a reminder? They have strong spiritual intuition and rich experience... Lumian mused as he noticed Lugano, startled by his movements and deep voice, also standing up.

Ludwig wasted no time in pulling the ice cream they had abandoned closer to him and happily ate away, completely unconcerned about what might happen next.

Lumian's gaze swept over Lugano and Ludwig before moving to Franca and Jenna, who were enjoying their dessert.

He was now considering a critical question:

Should they act together, or separate like they did in the morning?

If the earlier speculations were broadly accurate, then the bait phase to lure out Oxyto should already be over. What lay ahead would likely be probing attacks from the Shaman King and her companions.

In that case, moving together would allow them to better receive protection from the temperance faction, without worrying that Oxyto might strike at a less guarded spot and capture one or two as hostages. But if the attack was fierce enough to force the temperance faction's hidden forces into a defensive position, staying together could lead to total annihilation.

Which choice was safer and more reasonable in this environment was a decision the team leader needed to make.
Lumian walked slowly toward the restaurant's entrance, mentally filtering through the questions and speculations he'd considered earlier.
He thought of his own description of the spirit realm in Raklev:
A rudimentary, localized Underworld.
Underworld... Lumian's eyelids twitched, and he quietly asked again, "Can any of you see or sense the Underworld?"
He was asking whether Zombies and Wraiths could detect the Underworld.
Knight of Swords Maric quickly answered, "No, unless someone directly opens the door to the Underworld or is already from there. Otherwise, it can only be sensed through certain traces.
"Before the Underworld anomaly, it was possible."
It was possible before the Underworld anomaly? *Is this inferred from ancient records?*
Lumian wasn't particularly concerned about this; instead, he was more interested in something else: If Oxyto has indeed begun integrating the local spirit realm into her Paramita, does that mean her Paramita qualifies as a small-scale Underworld?
Moreover, it had to be a small-scale Underworld that was still bound to this region.
Otherwise, based on Lumian's understanding of Paramita, Oxyto could have easily taken her Paramita away and left the area.
Of course, it's also possible that she hadn't achieved another goal yet.
A small-scale Underworld... Lumian muttered to himself and then walked toward Franca and Jenna, smiling as he said, "I heard Chaban Street is unique to this area. Would you two lovely ladies like to be my guides?"
Chaban Street was where Franca and Jenna had first noticed the temperature drop slightly, indicating that they might have encountered Oxyto there.
In the eyes of the nearby customers, Lumian's invitation was a blatant attempt to arrange a date. However, Franca and Jenna exchanged a glance and understood that Lumian was suggesting they should act together, with Chaban Street as their destination.
"Sure." Franca and Jenna smiled in unison and stood up.
This left those around them somewhat stunned:
Are they that easy to invite?
If I'd known, I would have plucked up the courage to ask!
Together, Lumian, Franca, Jenna, and the others strolled toward Chaban Street, exchanging relaxed remarks about their

impressions of the city.
About fifteen minutes later, they reached the street predominantly occupied by locals.
Gray-white stone houses stood in rows, appearing rugged yet solid. Outside each house, strips of wool hung, adding a vibrant, exotic touch that distinguished it from the Star Highlands.
Compared to other streets in Raklev City, the locals here were more likely to wear traditional clothing: dark red woolen robes for men and brightly colored skirts for women.
Similarly, many of them carried skull amulets of various designs, some mottled and brown with wool wigs, some painted purple, green, and red, and some holding caramel-colored tobacco from East Balam between their teeth. Others appeared as white as jade, with dark eye sockets and insects crawling in and out.
Standing at the entrance to Chaban Street, Lumian paused instead of moving forward, signaling Franca and Jenna to stay slightly behind him.
He then took something out of his Traveler's Bag.
It was a golden mask, with the area around the eyes and the face painted in either black or white.
It was an Eggers family mask crafted by Death Himself!
Since this pure gold mask was initially designed to help the living sense and enter the Underworld and was directly created by the deity who ruled over death and the Underworld, wearing it might reveal something related to the Underworld within a certain range. In the Raklev region, the local spirit realm was akin to a small, rudimentary Underworld.
If the local spirit realm had really been integrated into Oxyto's Paramita, seeing it would be equivalent to seeing that Paramita, revealing Shaman King Oxyto!
Without hesitation, Lumian donned the golden Eggers family mask.
His breath rapidly cooled, becoming increasingly still. His body went cold in an instant, losing the sensation of life, and his blood ceased to flow.
Through the golden mask, Lumian noticed the surroundings dimming slightly, with the colors fading and the temperature dropping a little.
Apart from that, everything appeared normal.
So, this is the world through the eyes of the undead? I can't see any trace of that spirit realm... Is it hidden deeper due to being integrated into Paramita? Hmm, I can sense the spirit world directly but can't detect the Underworld... No wonder one has to wait for an opportunity to enter the Underworld instead of simply

locating it and teleporting there after wearing the Eggers family mask... Lumian muttered silently, not giving up on his original theory, and tried to stimulate the lingering aura of the Blood Emperor.
The purpose of activating Alista Tudor's lingering aura was to highlight the seal left by the Underworld Daoist.
This powerful being from Franca's world was clearly related to the pathways of Death, Darkness, and Warrior. According to Madam Magician, He might have also had contact with the deranged Death and made some agreements. His seals could potentially enhance the Eggers family's masks.
As a slight pain pricked his right palm and the cold, rotten sensation spread, Lumian's vision abruptly changed.
Along the entire Chaban Street, the fabric strips hanging from the walls lost their color and turned gray, while the people walking there became inexplicably blurry, as if shrouded in thick fog.
However, the skull amulets they wore remained unusually clear, their colors even more vivid by contrast.
Lumian also saw pale or dark red flames ignite in the hollow sockets of those human skulls, flickering and exuding an eerie chill of death.
In that instant, Lumian realized he was "seeing" the spirit realm of Raklev.
It overlapped with the entire Raklev area, where spirits wandered in the shadows while humans lived openly.
Standing on the edge of the spirit realm, Lumian didn't attempt to step inside but instead searched from a distance for any signs of Paramita's presence.
He saw a vast black cloud hanging over the sky in the direction of Lake Dalsh, saw some skulls floating mid-air on the streets with ghostly child-like figures flickering within their burning sockets, and saw how the wilderness below the mountains seemed to have encroached directly, blending into the city seamlessly.
As expected... Lumian immediately had a clear realization:
Oxyto is inside this Paramita, which has merged with the spirit realm!
With this understanding, the first thought that flashed through Lumian's mind was: My mission ends here. Next, I'll lend the Eggers family's golden mask to the Knight of Swords and the temperance faction, leaving them to organize their forces to enter Paramita and fight Oxyto, while we return to Trier to avoid the potential danger.
But on second thought, Lumian realized that wouldn't work.
Because if they only had the Eggers family's golden mask and not

the Underworld Daoist's seal, even a Wraith wearing it wouldn't be able to directly "see" Oxyto's mutated Paramita!
A possibility vaguely came to Lumian's mind.
He said in a low voice to the hidden Knight of Swords Maric, "I've found Oxyto's Paramita. First, take the Two of Cups and the others to safety. Then, as Wraiths, attach yourselves to me, and I'll lead all of you into Paramita!"
"Alright." The Knight of Swords somewhat ethereal voice couldn't conceal his joy and malice.
It was directed at Oxyto.

Lumian thought for a moment and then specifically reminded, "Don't forget the Four of Swords."

To be honest, he almost overlooked Anthony's presence, but because he was constantly thinking about what his teammates were doing and how to coordinate with them, he didn't forget entirely.

When he invited the two Demonesses to Chaban Street at St. Millom Restaurant, Lumian didn't think of Anthony right away. It was only when he reached the street that he remembered their teammate. But he couldn't find the Hypnotist, who had used Psychological Invisibility. He could only trust that Anthony, with his rich experience, would realize that once the rest of the team had gathered together, it was clear the next actions weren't suited to splitting up, and he would follow.

Anthony's habits as an information broker combined well with Psychological Invisibility.

After a two-second pause following Lumian's reminder, the Knight of Swords said, "We won't forget."

It seems like you already did... but the temperance faction's demigod shouldn't be affected much by Anthony's Psychological Invisibility, so when sending Franca and Jenna away, they shouldn't really forget about Anthony... If that's the case, one major cause of death for a Hypnotist would definitely be that Psychological Invisibility works too well, causing teammates to forget or overlook them... As Lumian mused to himself, the special Paramita before him suddenly changed.

A deafening crash sounded from Lake Dalsh as gray-white water surged upward like a tsunami, reaching into the air. The wilderness, already intertwined with the city of Raklev, began to dominate. In an instant, it crossed squares and streets, swallowing Lumian, who had not yet reached Chaban Street, while avoiding Franca and the others.

Oxyto, blessed by the Great Mother, seemed to realize she had been exposed.

Her choice was to use the nature of Paramita to temporarily separate the blasphemer of the Child of God from the temperance faction's demigods, then exploit the brief time difference to achieve her desired goal regarding Lumian.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian, wearing the Eggers family's golden mask and transformed into an undead, felt his body grow "heavier," as if cold masses had taken residence inside him.

In the next second, he saw the indistinct human figures on

Chaban Street vanish, along with Franca, Jenna, Ludwig, Lugano, and possibly Anthony behind him. It was as if they were in two separate worlds.
The human skulls in various states became increasingly distinct, their eye sockets burning with pale or dark red flames as they all turned to face Lumian.
At the end of Chaban Street, at the city's edge where it blended more deeply with the wilderness, swaying figures crawled out from unknown places and began walking toward Lumian.
There were rotting long-haired oxen with only a few pieces of pus-oozing flesh left, giant birds with exposed bones flying low, pythons dragging half-melted threads of flesh between their decaying tissues, and monstrous hills made of multiple headless skeletons.
Human skulls from all corners of the city were also swiftly converging on Chaban Street, floating in the air and covering the sky, blocking out the pale, dim, and heatless "sunlight."
Lumian appeared stunned, as if he had encountered something terrifying, or was like an undead creature facing a higher-ranked and more terrifying kindred spirit. For a brief moment, he stood frozen, unable to move.
Just then, a wretched howl, filled with pain, echoed from Lake Dalsh.
The terrifying and piercing sound was like a high-speed spinning drill that bored directly into Lumian's soul. His vision went dark, and he lost consciousness.
When Lumian regained his thoughts and awareness of his body, he found himself midway along Chaban Street, accompanied by the Knight of Swords Maric, who had appeared at some point, dressed in a black vest and white shirt.
All around him, crystalline cold had frozen human skulls of varying states in mid-air, on the ground, and on the surfaces of gray-white stone buildings.
The surreal frozen scene stretched all the way to the wilderness on the outskirts of the city.
In the staggering army of undead creatures, the rotting monsters shed flesh onto the ground, leaving only bones-yellowed, brown, or bleached white. The skeletal remains sank into the soil, and droplets of crimson blood, not their own, oozed from the surface.
Meanwhile, the wraiths and evil spirits swelled like balloons and burst silently, turning into strange dust.
Although Lumian didn't fully understand what was happening, two thoughts sprang to mind: Have they all been cursed?
Even the fleshless bones were cursed to bleed?

With that thought, Lumian couldn't help but raise his right hand and wipe his nose.
He immediately noticed some blackened bloodstains on the back of his hand.
This came from within his body, blood that had long since stopped flowing.
In the banshee's wail just now, not only was his soul wounded, but his undead body seemed to have suffered physical damage too. Some capillaries had ruptured, causing the blackened blood to seep out.
Terrifying... Lumian had roughly figured out what had just happened.
Oxyto screamed from a distance, using the Banshee's Howl enhanced by Paramita, and!
instantly lost consciousness.
Did the temperance faction's demigods attach themselves to me as wraiths before Paramita expanded, pulling me into Paramita right away? Then, they took over my body and used their abilities to deal with the swarming army of human skulls and undead?
The Knight of Swords also attached himself to me, which is why he's now in Paramita?
After grasping the recent encounter, Lumian had a clearer and more accurate understanding of the terror of demigods: Oxyto isn't even a full Angel but just a Banshee's Howl knocked me unconscious, robbing me of my ability to fight. It took me over ten seconds to wake up... Without the presence of temperance faction demigods, those ten seconds would have been more than enough for Oxyto to kill me ten times over...
This isn't something a drawn demigod can compare to. Facing a real demigod, if I don't seize the initiative, I won't even have the chance to draw the Sword of Courage or use Desire Incarnation!
There's no time for the animated shadow to take the damage for me unless I anticipate it in advance...
With these thoughts swirling, Lumian regained control of his body.
Then, he heard the Knight of Swords, Maric, mutter softly, "Oxyto has retreated. She should be near Lake Dalsh.
"We still don't know what kind of help she's seeking."
"Lake Dalsh?" Lumian asked in mild surprise.
That serene, beautiful, sacred lake?
On second thought, it makes sense. All mining operations in the Raklev region have avoided Lake Dalsh, leaving it entirely unpolluted...
The Knight of Swords surveyed the surroundings but didn't immediately dash off into the wilderness toward Lake Dalsh.

He nodded slightly and said, "Lake Dalsh itself is special, connected to the fallen Death. The establishment of this small spirit realm in the Raklev region was made possible due to Lake Dalsh.
"That former Balam Empire official even used an Undying's skull from the Church of Death and, using his Gatekeeper powers, opened a door to the Underworld and fixed it onto the Undying's skull. This prevented it from completely closing too quickly, allowing a bit of the Underworld's aura to leak out."
"The skull of an Undying? Undying can die too?" Lumian instinctively asked.
The Knight of Swords started walking towards the edge of the frozen world.
He glanced at Lumian and said, "An Undying is only Sequence 4 in the Death pathway. They can still die if killed."
I see... Lumian nodded almost imperceptibly.
The Knight of Swords continued, "The aura leaking from the Underworld, the unique traits of the Undying's skull, and the special nature of Lake Dalsh all worked together to sustain this spirit realm, drawing the souls of dead creatures in the region and letting them gradually wither away."
After listening, Lumian froze for a moment.
"You seem to know a lot about the local spirit realm..."
The Knight of Swords replied, "The Rose School of Thought ruled here for over a thousand years. Apart from the uniqueness of Lake Dalsh, everything else was long understood."
"Then why didn't you say so earlier?" Lumian blurted out.
If you'd told me sooner, I might have guessed Oxyto's intentions earlier!
"We didn't initially connect Oxyto to the spirit realm, so that intelligence wasn't included in the information," explained the Knight of Swords. "After that, I answered whenever you asked, but didn't elaborate. Speaking is also a desire that requires temperance."
"..." Lumian suddenly understood how Franca felt every time she heard him say, "I'll have to start with the events at the Samaritan Women's Spring, where Madame Hela and I..."
While talking, he and Maric reached the edge of the city, where the frozen world met the desolate wilderness.
Lumian instinctively glanced at the thick layer of ice encasing the gray-white buildings.
Using the reflective surface, he was astonished to see a blurry figure in each of his eyes.
One wore a small black bonnet and a court dress of the same color; the other had no head and was dressed in a dark, intricately

patterned, sinister gown.
Lumian then noticed translucent-ringed insects crawling in and out of his mouth, yet he felt nothing.
...
At the entrance to Chaban Street, Franca, Jenna, and the others felt a sudden chill engulf them and saw Lumian vanish before their eyes.
Before they could communicate or react, a voice, slightly magnetic and ethereal like a dream, echoed in their ears: "I'll send you back to Trier first."
Franca, Jenna, and Lugano instinctively turned their bodies and discovered that a young-looking man had appeared next to them at some point.
He wore a white shirt, draped in a thin black trench coat. With black hair and green eyes, he had a night-like, handsome quality, and wore a pair of red gloves on both hands.

Chapter 766: Early Labor

Gazing at the young man wearing red gloves, Franca cautiously asked, "Who might you be?"

She wasn't about to trust a stranger just because of what he said unless influenced by some Beyonder power.

"Two of Cups, Seven of Cups. You don't need to be involved in what's coming next," said the young man in red gloves directly, calling Franca and Jenna by their Minor Arcana names.

His voice carried the natural authority of someone used to leading many people, instilling a faint sense of fear in Franca and the others.

He knows our Tarot Club codenames... A member of the Tarot Club? One of the Knight of Swords' helpers? His outfit looks like those "Red Gloves" from the Church of Evernight Goddess... As Franca pondered, she didn't sense any warning from her spiritual intuition.

Before she could respond, the young man in red gloves pulled out a tarot card.

The card's front depicted a goddess pouring holy water under a sky full of stars.

Major Arcana, The Star!

So, it's Mr. Star... Franca and Jenna hesitated no longer and nodded in unison, saying, "Okay."

Lugano stood there, a bit dazed.

Why did he take out a card?

I think I've heard of something like this, but I can't remember...

Almost simultaneously, Anthony appeared out of nowhere and squeezed in beside Franca and Jenna.

Franca was startled for a moment, muttering to herself, "I really did forget about you..."

Mr. Star didn't say much more. He opened his mouth slightly.

In an instant, Franca and the others were enveloped by a vast, invisible spirit, and then they ascended into the layered, colorful spirit world, like they were traveling in a hot air balloon.

...

Along the city's periphery, covered in crystalline ice, Lumian, wearing the Eggers family's golden mask, withdrew his gaze.

He could roughly guess that the blurry figures in his eyes were the temperance faction's demigods responsible for this operation. One of them, headless, seemed to resemble the temperance faction's Angel he had seen before. The translucent insects crawling in and out of his mouth were likely helpers invited by the temperance faction.

How many people have taken residence in my body just now? Lumian grumbled internally as he followed the Knight of Swords, Maric, in a mad dash.

They entered the wilderness outside Raklev under the pale, cold "sunlight," heading swiftly toward Lake Dalsh.

Due to the unique influence of Paramita, Lumian couldn't teleport anywhere beyond his line of sight. He had to use a visual lock to establish a position, which made it challenging to appear instantly at the edge of Lake Dalsh.

After running some distance, he reached out and grabbed the Knight of Swords' shoulder.

Almost simultaneously, blazing white flames surged from within him, instantly covering his entire body.

The Knight of Swords understood his intent without asking and promptly dematerialized into a wraith, attaching himself to Lumian.

Lumian transformed into a white-hot spear and shot off into the distance in a brilliant display.

The flaming spear streaked through the sky, crossing vast distances to arrive at the edge of Lake Dalsh in no time.

As Lumian detached from the blazing white spear, he noticed that even in Paramita, intertwined with the spirit realm, this lake remained tranquil, clear, sacred, and beautiful.

In the dim surroundings, the gray-white water seemed weightless, stretching upwards like a giant curtain, perhaps drawn to some high-altitude entity.

In front of the water curtain, countless human skulls formed a mountainous head.

Among the skulls of various colors, one stood out the most. It was at the very top, crystal clear as if carved from crystal, and significantly larger than a normal human skull.

Instead of pale or dark red flames, the eye sockets of this crystal skull reflected a mysterious, intricately patterned, ancient bronze door.

The door was slightly ajar, revealing endless darkness within. In that darkness were countless indescribable eyes, staring out yet unable to emerge.

Along the edges of the bronze door, strange, grotesque, and sometimes revolting hands grasped the frame as if trying to squeeze through but unable to. They only managed to scratch out piercing noises that seemed to tear at the human eardrum.

Many spirits and human skulls were drawn to this place, gradually becoming part of the massive head.

Is that crystal skull the Undying's skull used back then? Is the

bronze door in its eye sockets the Death Sequence 5's Gatekeeper's door to the Underworld? Hmm, a Sequence 5 can't keep the Underworld door open for long, so they used the Undying's skull and the unique properties of Lake Dalsh to fix it... But where has Oxyto, the Shaman King, gone? As this thought crossed Lumian's mind, he saw the countless human skulls forming the massive head in the air open and close their bony teeth, speaking in unison in various voices: "Why couldn't you give me a little more time?
"If I can't have it, I'll destroy this place and see how many of you can survive the calamity of this collapsing Paramita!
"And I have already abandoned this place and left the Raklev region using my prior preparations!
"Hahaha, hahaha!"
Amid the sharp, hoarse, old, and deep laughter of the human skulls, Lumian felt the massive shadow in the sky descend toward his head. Cracks appeared in the ground below, growing deeper and revealing a dark void.
All the skulls, including the crystal one, developed tiny cracks, seemingly ready to shatter completely in no time.
At that moment, Lumian felt a chill leave his body, and all the skulls stopped cracking as if temporarily held back by an invisible external force.
This also halted the process of Paramita's collapse and destruction. Although it didn't reverse, it wasn't going to happen immediately.
Is this the temperance faction's demigod or their invited helper using their ability? It seems Oxyto really escaped. After testing the waters with the Banshee's Howl, she decisively abandoned this Paramita, clearly stronger than other Madames, and used her prior arrangements and the unique properties of this place to escape before the temperance faction could act... A series of thoughts flashed through Lumian's mind as he took in the scene before him.
An ancient voice suddenly echoed in his ears: "Don't just listen to what Oxyto says.
"In my experience, anyone who leaves behind so many words before running away is either already insane or trying to cover up something.
"Oxyto did indeed flee here decisively before we locked onto her and planned to destroy this Paramita, but why would she tell us her objectives? Purely to vent her emotions?
"That may be one reason, but there should be a more important one: she wants us to focus on the collapse and destruction of this Paramita and overlook something else."
Lumian hadn't entirely dismissed his doubts after Oxyto's

proclamations through those human skulls, but such behavior wasn't unusual for the indulgence faction of the Rose School of Thought.
Those accustomed to indulgence were always eager to express their emotions.
The ancient voice finally said, "Time will provide us the answer."
As soon as these words fell, Lumian saw the insects with translucent rings flying out.
Suddenly, everything around him slowed down.
A grayish-white fog settled over everything Lumian saw, making it all look surreal.
Soon after, everything projected on the foggy "curtain" started to rewind. The human skulls were no longer cracked in countless places, the ground returned to smoothness, and the thick shadows receded into the sky.
Time wasn't moving backward; rather, recent history and events were being displayed.
Lumian then saw a pair of brown wings that could blot out the sky, leaving the current shadow behind.
Between the wings, each feather as large as a human head, stood a female figure with an exposed abdomen.
The woman was as beautiful as the moon at night, her face radiating maternal brilliance, but her hands and feet were arched, with sharp nails that gleamed coldly.
This was the Shaman King, Oxyto.
Having seen her male form, Lumian recognized her instantly. Her features were softer now, and her facial details were more delicate.
Her belly was swollen, stretched taut with black veins visible on the surface. The skin was so thin that it was almost transparent, revealing the merging forms of numerous bird-clawed monster infants inside.
She... stuffed all those corpse-born bird-clawed infants into her belly... *What kind of monster is she nurturing?* No wonder the bloodline connection didn't work directly, only indirectly within a certain range... As Lumian came to this realization, Oxyto reached for her belly in the scene from the past.
With a tearing sound, she ripped her abdomen open, blood pouring out.
Oxyto forcefully pulled out an infant slightly smaller than Ludwig. Its skin was pale, its flesh decayed, and remnants of four or five heads and seven or eight bird claws remained on its surface. A pure, clear membrane, seemingly from Lake Dalsh, covered the baby's body.

Oxyto let out a cry of agony as she threw the infant into the eye socket of the crystal skull.
The rotten, multi-headed infant was clearly much larger than the eye socket and the bronze door within it, yet it mysteriously shrank smaller and smaller until it squeezed through a gap barely wide enough for a hand, disappearing into the boundless darkness behind the door.
Is Oxyto's ultimate goal to send that monster infant into the Underworld, making some terrifying thing a reality? And now she's been forced into early labor? As Lumian had this thought, he realized the coldness inside him had vanished.
The figure in the small black bonnet and the Knight of Swords in the vest and shirt simultaneously appeared in front of the crystal skull.
But they seemed unable to pass through the crack in the bronze door and were trying to open it a little more.
The Underworld... Wearing the Eggers family's golden mask, Lumian felt a stirring inside.
Seizing the opportunity provided by the temperance faction demigods stalling Paramita's collapse, he activated the black mark on his right shoulder, teleporting to the front of the crystal skull.
In his eyes, the bronze door loomed abnormally large.
He stretched out both hands and pressed them on either side of the bronze door.
A hollow, muffled buzzing filled the air as the bronze door opened a little wider.
Lumian immediately felt a terrifying suction, and with a swish, he was pulled through the crack, flung deep into the darkness.
Inside him, two more cold masses joined him.

Chapter 767: Underworld

With Lumian vanishing before the crystal skull, the human skulls, already covered in countless cracks, lost their support.

They shattered with a thunderous crash, bringing down the shadows from above and splitting the grassy wilderness into fragments.

Oxyto's Paramita crumbled toward the cracked crystal skull, and everything there silently turned to dust.

The spirits dissipated, the light vanished, and the void of darkness swallowed everything.

No one knew how much time had passed before a gentle light began to glow in the absolute blackness, revealing a barren, dim, pale, and almost frozen wilderness.

In the center of the wasteland lay the tranquil and sacred Lake Dalsh.

The headless lady, draped in a dark-black dress and carrying four heads, swiftly appeared beside the lake, quietly gazing at its serene, transparent surface.

...

As soon as Lumian was pulled through the bronze door, he felt countless eyes upon him, chilling his body further and numbing him.

Meanwhile, arms of unknown origin reached out, grabbing at his head, neck, torso, and legs.

Some had dull skin with white, bony teeth; others were so decayed that their flesh was falling off, slowly wriggling with equally decayed worms; some lacked skin altogether; others were merely illusory Spirit Bodies...

What they all shared was a bone-chilling cold that could freeze the soul.

On Lumian's face, the golden mask painted with black and white oil sparkled with a faint yet pure light. The reaching arms halted momentarily before retracting.

The eyes watching him from the darkness also withdrew their gaze.

Lumian regained his thoughts and his sense of his body.

Below him, he discovered a deep pit with no visible bottom or boundaries.

The edge of the pit was made up of layers of blurry worlds, spiraling downward to the limits of his vision.

These jumbled worlds layered atop each other, and Lumian couldn't make out what lay within them, only knowing that each was vaster than the Star Highlands, with all previous watching

eyes stemming from the pit's bottomless dark.
Lumian plummeted suddenly, falling into one of these blurry worlds in the blink of an eye.
Miraculously, he stood on a barren wilderness exposed with gray-white rocks, surrounded by heaps of bleached bones, densely packed and stretching toward various distant places.
At this moment, these bones lay still, as if slumbering through time.
Is this the Underworld? I wonder where the Abscessed Hand's body part might be. Lumian looked around, muttering to himself in silence.
(Amonoculus' note: It is the contracted creature that gave him the traverse the Spirit World. Lumian must find its body parts or else he cannot achieve godhood. According to Fors, one of the body parts is located in the Underworld.)
It was the chance to enter the Underworld that had prompted him to help voluntarily, using the Eggers family's golden mask and the Underworld Daoist's seal to push open the bronze door inside the crystal skull.
Now, the problem was that the Underworld was much more vast than he had anticipated, and he had no idea where to start looking.
Similarly, the whereabouts and intentions of the decaying infant that Oxyto had sent were unknown.
Perhaps I could rely on the contract I had signed with the Abscessed Hand. Essentially being part of the same body, they are mystically connected. The contract I had signed is, to some extent, also with the rest of its body... Lumian quickly formulated a plan and spoke in a cold, hoarse voice, "Knight of Swords, have all of you entered as well?"
"Yes," came the faint voice of the Knight of Swords, Maric.
Pausing momentarily, he added, "A companion of mine has also entered."
Lumian nodded. "Why aren't both of you coming out? You are now in a wraith state, so there's no need to worry about dying instantly in the Underworld."
You're essentially undead beings now; what's there to fear about the Underworld's unique conditions?
The Knight of Swords responded, "But we are fundamentally still living beings. If we stay in the Underworld as wraiths for too long, we won't be able to revert to human form and will forever exist as wraiths or evil spirits. By using your body, we can temporarily avoid the influence of the Underworld, emerging only when it's crucial."

"I see..." Lumian looked up at the pale, dim sky, "I also can't wear this Eggers family's mask for too long. We have about three hours."
As he spoke, Lumian tried to activate without using the black mark on his right shoulder, which was the Abscessed Hand's Spirit World Traversal ability.
With this mark, he faintly sensed something at the end of the wilderness on his right calling to him.
Is that the body part of the Abscessed Hand in the Underworld?
Just as Lumian had this thought, a figure appeared ahead.
It was an extremely delicate-looking young woman with an unnaturally pale complexion. Her deep blue eyes were profound and devoid of any emotional fluctuation; her light golden hair was tied in astern bun adorned with a small black bonnet with a fine black veil, and she wore a complicated, exquisite black Gothic court dress.
Is this the temperance faction demigod that was attached to me earlier? Lumian recalled the two blurry figures he saw through the crystalline ice.
One of them matched the lady before him perfectly!
The temperance faction's demigod floated in mid-air, slowly turned around, and then pointed in a direction, nodding at Lumian.
She was pointing toward the end of the wilderness on the right.
"Do you mean that Oxyto's prematurely born, decayed child might be over there?" Lumian asked for confirmation.
The lady in the black bonnet nodded gently in affirmation.
She then vanished into thin air, and Lumian felt another chill inside him.
It's all in that direction, huh... A coincidence? No, not a coincidence, it's more likely that something in that direction is drawing them there... Lumian turned his body, ready to teleport to the edge of his vision.
As soon as Lumian started to become transparent, his body was suddenly grabbed by pale hands that appeared out of nowhere, seizing his arms.
Lumian felt a paralyzing sensation throughout his body, as if his soul was being torn apart by an invisible force.
This time, the faint glow from the golden mask had no effect.
Lumian attempted to ignite a blazing white flame to ward off the cold, stiffness, and numbness, but he was overwhelmed by an invisible terror, trembling uncontrollably, unable to respond effectively.
When he regained his clarity and composure, he found himself still standing in the same spot, but surrounding layers of bleached

bones had all risen up, encircling him as if to protect him.
At the same time, Lumian heard the voice of the Knight of Swords, Maric: "Once you put on the Eggers family's mask and become a pure undead being, you will also possess all the traits of an undead, one of which is being suppressed by higher beings of the Death pathway, making it difficult to resist and your body and mind willing to accept enslavement.
"In contrast, we wraiths, who aren't pure and can switch states freely, are less affected."
Was this why I couldn't resist just now? I wonder if the Sword of Courage can counteract this effect. It theoretically should... Lumian realized with a start. "Did both of you save me just now?"
The Knight of Swords didn't continue on this topic but instead reminded Lumian, "It seems that in the Underworld, you can teleport but not teleport freely, as that is considered a desecration of Death and attracts the punishment of the Underworld"
According to the mystic knowledge mentioned by Madam Magician, teleporting should be normal in the Underworld since it stems from the spirit world, but considering it as desecration of Death seems a bit too strict, typical of the oppression by higher-ranking beings of the Death pathway... Lumian pondered for a few seconds, slightly bending his back.
A blazing white, radiant spear of flame immediately shot forth, illuminating the pale, dim half-sky, casting towards the far reaches of the wilderness.
As the white and red trail of the flame spear disappeared inch by inch, Lumian, transformed into the spear, hurled himself forward at the fastest speed he could achieve.
During this process, he noticed the wilderness sloped downwards, and the destination he, the Knight of Swords, and the temperance faction demigod aimed for was at the bottom of this 'hillside'.
After a while, the blazing white light scattered in all directions, and Lumian, now clad in a thick jacket, descended toward the ground.
Ahead of him lay a wide, surreal black river, so vast he couldn't see the other side.
The river flowed silently from the edge of the sky to its limits, exceptionally quiet.
"Is this the River Styx?" Lumian inquired of the temperance faction demigod within him.
Responding to Lumian was still the Knight of Swords, Maric: "It should be. It spans every layer of the Underworld. Crossing it is like entering the depths of the Underworld. If you hadn't stopped earlier and ended up flying above it, you would have fallen straight

into the river, and no one would have been able to pull you out."
Good thing the issue with teleporting just now gave me a warning: it's best to pause in uncertain environments... Lumian glanced left and right, noticing the wilderness was dotted with withered blood flowers, each concealing a multitude of corpses, bones, and shadows.
"How do I cross?" Lumian sensed that the missing part of the Abscessed Hand's body was on the other side of the River Styx.
No sooner had he asked, and before the Knight of Swords could respond, a dilapidated, gloomy black boat suddenly appeared on the shadowy river.
A figure draped in fragments stood on the boat, rowing with a long oar, guiding the vessel to Lumian's side before stopping at the river's edge.
Peering closely, Lumian saw that the ferryman was a severely decayed male corpse. Large portions of his body were exposed, and his eyes appeared gouged out, leaving hollow sockets entwined with thick blood vessels oozing yellow pus.
"Take this boat across?" Lumian asked, lowering his voice to consult the temperance faction member inside him.
Knight of Swords Maric replied in an ethereal but slightly grave tone, "It's the only way... But be careful of the boatman. The Underworld has mutated, and it could be affected too."

Chapter 768: Ferryman

Lumian nodded, his right hand naturally falling on the Traveler's Bag.

He then walked over to the dilapidated, gloomy boat, noticing the severely decayed boatman turning aside to make way, as if signaling for him to hurry aboard.

"Can you ferry me across the Styx?" Lumian asked politely in Dutanese.

Given that the former Death hailed from the Southern Continent, Lumian figured that speaking Dutanese might be more readily accepted by "all parties" in the Underworld.

After all, in an environment so rich with the stench of death that a living person couldn't last a second, using mystical languages like ancient Hermes, which could manipulate natural forces, might have unexpected effects. For instance, merely uttering the words "River Styx" could forge a strong connection with the dark, ethereal river before him, possibly causing it to whip up a massive wave and sweep him away.

The boatman, its eye sockets filled with thick blood vessels and oozing yellow pus, faced the river, wide enough that the opposite bank was out of sight, and remained motionless.

It seemed it was answering Lumian with his actions:

Why would you try to communicate with a corpse?

I can't hear you, nor can I make a sound.

It seems ordinary language won't do... I've heard that the Death pathway includes a Language of the Dead, but unfortunately, I don't speak it... Lumian muttered to himself quietly as he let his eyes take on a silver-black hue and slowly stepped onto the rickety, gloomy boat.

In his Eye of Calamity, the boatman's destiny was pure black, dead and void, showing no signs of change.

Does this mean no matter how much the boatman struggles, it can't change its status as a corpse, and its only fate is to wither away with time until even its existence vanishes?

But that doesn't mean the boatman can't do anything during this time before its demise. Its actions can still affect the fates of others, including mine and other undead beings. From this perspective, the boatman, or rather the summoned undead, should still have a destiny, only that the outcome cannot be changed...

Indeed, they have destinies, but my current rank isn't high enough to see them, is it? After all, objects have destinies too, but I can't see them now...

It might also be that the destinies of the dead need to interact with

others to manifest in the destinies of those others...
Perhaps because he had temporarily become an undead himself, Lumian couldn't help but ponder the destinies of these "residents" of the Underworld.
With the mystical knowledge he currently possessed, he couldn't define destiny precisely, nor did he know how much the mercury river of fate encompassed, or whether there were unseen aspects or hidden parts he wasn't aware of yet.
He felt there must be, which stemmed from a few simple questions:
Could it be that by donning the Eggers family's golden mask and becoming an undead, the river of fate that still existed for me simply disappears, turning utterly black and void?
And when I take off the mask, does the river of fate instantly return?
What then is the river of fate? A plaything at our disposal?
Although the golden mask of the Eggers family was made by Death, it didn't contain Beyonder characteristics and was only of a higher rank.
It surely wasn't simple enough to manipulate the river of fate so easily!
Later on, if there's a chance, I should have a Monster pathway Beyonder observe my fate to see the changes before and after donning the golden mask...
Uh... never mind, unless I find a demigod-level Monster pathway Beyonder, otherwise it would only harm them. Even when I had only Mr. Fool's seal, the false angelic rank, and the residual aura of the Blood Emperor, the patrol team's 'machine' Kolobo from Port Pylos was already too afraid to look at me, thinking it would bring him great danger. Now, I have also added the Underworld Daoist's seal and Omebella's bloodline...
Lumian positioned himself at the center of the battered boat, allowing the golden mask to turn his eyes iron-black.
He wanted to preemptively spot the boatman's weaknesses to prepare for any potential mishaps.
At that moment, the highly decayed boatman began to row, slowly steering the dark boat towards the other side of the surreal, shadowy river.
His body was entirely cloaked in dark colors, and Lumian struggled to find any sign of a vulnerable pale spot amid the black.
Of course, these dark colors also meant that the boatman was completely vulnerable to sunlight and lightning.
The next second, Knight of Swords Maric's voice rang in Lumian's ears: "Its weaknesses might not be here."

Not here? *What do you mean they're not here? Can weaknesses be separated from the person?* Just as Lumian was filled with intense curiosity, he remembered several stories his sister had once told him.

In those stories, a type of monster called a lich would create phylacteries and hide them in heavily protected, secret places. As long as the phylacteries were not found and destroyed, the lich would not truly die, effectively separating its fatal weakness from itself.

(Amonoculus' note: phylactery ⌜ either of two small square leather boxes containing slips inscribed with scriptural passages and traditionally worn on the left arm and on the head by observant Jewish men and especially adherents of Orthodox Judaism during morning weekday prayers.)

And in the twenty-two paths of the divine, such things were hardly surprising.

The Knight of Swords continued, "Were you trying to discern its fate earlier?"

"It holds a considerable rank; this is a dangerous endeavor."

A considerable rank? Lumian glanced at the boatman, draped in tattered clothes and highly decayed flesh, unable to see anything particularly formidable about it.

However, the fact that it could ferry across the River Styx without sinking into it certainly suggested something extraordinary.

Lumian diverted his gaze, closely watching the boatman's every move, patiently waiting as the dilapidated boat made its way across the River Styx to the opposite shore.

The battered boat rocked slowly, as if it might fall apart at any moment, taking what felt like an eternity to reach the middle of the river.

Suddenly, the highly decayed boatman raised its long oar and turned toward Lumian.

As the gloomy boat came to a halt, the boatman's mouth abruptly opened, splitting down to its decayed chest, its hollowed-out navel, and further down to its groin.

Its body unfolded like a coat unbuttoning, stretching out to the sides, revealing no darkened organs or bones of its own, but rather a heap of half-melted, decayed limbs.

Once again, Lumian felt a chill that made him shudder, daring not to harbor any thoughts of resistance.

He clenched his right hand, which had been ready.

He grasped the Sword of Courage from the Traveler's Bag, holding the hilt of the iron-black broadsword.

Courage swiftly filled Lumian's body, prompting a manic smile on

his face.
What is there to fear from a mere boatman?
Even if Death Himself stood before me, I would strike Him down with my sword!
Lumian drew his broadsword, now ablaze with white-blue flames, and slashed fiercely at the boatman, who was lunging at him with its skin peeled open.
With a thud, the Sword of Courage cut through the pile of melting limbs in the boatman's stomach and struck the layer of rotting skin riddled with holes behind its chest.
But the broadsword failed to split the seemingly fragile, decayed skin.
As Lumian readied a second strike, one accompanied by a massive explosion, the boatman swiftly recoiled, slowly closing its opened chest and abdomen.
At the same time, the voice of the Knight of Swords rang in Lumian's ears: "Stop. We've got it under control"
"This is our chance to finish it off!" Lumian responded without hesitation.
He and the Knight of Swords were communicating in Intis.
The Knight of Swords paused for a second and said, "I know, you're not afraid of it, and you could kill it, but if it dies, we can't cross the River Styx."
Seeing Lumian calm down a bit, the Knight of Swords added, "Besides, killing it won't grant you any Beyonder characteristics. It's merely the skin of the true Ferryman. It seems to have been consuming other corpses, trying to regain a body but never succeeding."
Lumian accepted the Knight of Swords' explanation.
Having courage didn't mean being deaf to others' words, it's just selectively ignoring dangerous warnings.
He then placed the Sword of Courage back among the ordinary straight swords in the Traveler's Bag.
This time, he didn't feel the post-event fear because this was the purpose of using the Sword of Courage. The only thing he feared was:
A demigod's skin has been peeled off? *What in hell happened in the Underworld back then?*
Lumian watched as the boatman slowly and struggle-fully pinched together the split skin and rotting flesh on its chest, like buttoning up a coat.
Following this, the boatman plunged its long, dark, decayed oar into the surreal shadowy River Styx, moving it at an even slower pace as if resisting something.

Has the demigod of the temperance faction possessed the boatman, forcefully taking control and making it continue to row? It looks like this control is met with strong resistance... Lumian remained ready to draw the Sword of Courage again in case of any unforeseen incidents.

As the gloomy boat rocked its way towards the opposite shore of the Styx, Lumian, having nothing better to do, started a conversation with the Knight of Swords.

"I saw the entire Underworld as a series of descending layers earlier. Crossing the Styx should just get us to the other side of this layer, so why did you say it's like entering deep into the Underworld?"

The Knight of Swords simply replied, "The geography of the Underworld doesn't completely align with the real world. According to the many notes of the Eggers family, there are two ways to enter the depths of the Underworld. The first is to descend layer by layer through the worlds encircling the Styx, which are used to punish sinners, ultimately arriving at the realm where the Blessed of Death reside. The second is to cross the Styx directly."

"Is that so..." Lumian mused aloud, "So, our destination is the realm once inhabited by the Blessed of Death?"

The Knight of Swords paused for a second and said, "Death's palace should be there as well."

The palace of the former Death? Lumian's eyelids twitched at the thought.

As he and the Knight of Swords alternated between silence and conversation, the boundary on the other side of the Styx finally came into view.

Chapter 769: Incomplete Corpse

Unlike the wilderness Lumian and company had passed through earlier, strewn with grayish-white rocks, the soil on this side of the River Styx was pitch black. There were no withered blood-colored flowers, no ghostly skeletons, and no decaying corpses to be seen.

The sky above was no longer lit by pale, dim, cold "sunlight." Instead, a rich darkness dominated this boundless world.

Deep within the darkness, clusters of pale-white, greenish-hued flames hung quietly in mid-air, spaced far apart as if serving as street lamps.

Using the illumination from the nearest pale flame, Lumian quickly leaped from the gloomy boat to the shore.

Once his feet hit solid ground, his heart steadied considerably. As he crossed the River Styx, the scent of death in his undead body became more intense and evident, while his spirit and consciousness, tightly protected by the Eggers family's golden mask, felt a slight chill.

Following that, a sinister coldness pervaded his body, but the highly decayed boatman, with its hollow eyes, simply reinserted its long oar back into the river's current.

It made no new move to attack Lumian.

It seemed incapable of attacking targets on the shore.

Watching the gloomy boat and the boatman, now facing away from him, slowly drift away, Lumian mused, "Not going to finish it off? With its rank, that decayed human skin would match your messenger quite well" This referred to the Knight of Swords' messenger, the Half-Fairy, a spirit being missing the outer half of her body, meaning she was precisely lacking human skin, while the boatman was just the peeled skin of a demigod from the Death pathway.

The Knight of Swords was silent for a few seconds, letting his voice echo in Lumian's ears: "She only lacks her own skin."

This reply was curt and restrained, yet Lumian almost heard the Knight of Swords roar: Don't just find any skin for my messenger to wear!

Pausing for a second, the Knight of Swords continued, "We might need to return across the River Styx, and we don't know how many Ferryman are left there."

A need to return across the Styx? Lumian then pondered a very serious and important question.

"After dealing with Oxyto's child, how do we leave the Underworld?"

Clearly, this was not something that could be solved by teleportation.
"Our allies in the outside world should be seeking help from the Death pathway's Sequence 5 Gatekeeper or a corresponding demigod, which might necessitate our return to the peripheral areas of the Underworld we were in before, to access the bronze doors of the Underworld."
Lumian nodded, following a vague sensation brought on by the black mark on his right shoulder, and took a step forward.
He didn't ask the Knight of Swords and the temperance faction demigod if he was veering off the path to find Oxyto's child.
If he were wrong, they would inform him.
Reaching the nearest pale flame, Lumian realized it truly served as a street lamp.
It was crafted from gold, shaped like a kneeling figure with hands bound behind its back, its head tilted back and torso bent outward.
A dark, sinister wick protruded from the statue's mouth, coated in a layer of pale yellow translucent grease. The pale-white flame burned quietly, seemingly for thousands of years without a hint of extinguishing.
From this human-shaped lamp onward, the ground was covered with dark, cracked stone slabs.
Lumian could imagine just how solemn and solemn the path to Death's palace must have been.
(Amonoculus' note: Not sure why the official translation has used the word solemn twice here.)
He walked along the path, which was inexplicably cracked and shattered, quickly but cautiously heading deeper into the darkness, towards the place suspected to hold the Abscessed Hand's body part.
The path also presented a slightly downward trajectory.
This reminded Lumian of Hotel Orella he had once stayed in, recalling the words spoken by Iveljsta, a descendant of Death- many believed that the true hell and the origin of death lay deep underground, so one had to continually descend, delving deeper and deeper.
This is reflected in the Underworld too... After walking for a while, Lumian suddenly conjured a large, blazing white flame in his hand.
The bright light quickly dispelled the darkness further away, allowing Lumian to clearly see the surroundings: Mausoleum-style buildings were either completely collapsed or half fallen, deathly quiet, with no bones or bodies. These buildings varied in color, not just black, but also pale-white, golden, dark red, and sinister green.

"Did the Blessed of Death once live in these houses?" Lumian asked the Knight of Swords, who was well-versed in the history of the Southern Continent and the legends of the Underworld.
The Knight of Swords replied succinctly, "I don't know" He then added, "Only by finding a creature that entered and exited the Underworld before the fall of Death can we be sure."
"Alright..." Lumian didn't press further and quickened his pace.
This was because he felt that the body part of the Abscessed Hand was not far ahead!
His right hand went back into the Traveler's Bag, ready to draw the Sword of Courage at any moment.
As for the Devil's Whispers ring, he didn't plan to wear it yet; he didn't think becoming undead would immunize him against the malevolent effects unleashed by that Sealed Artifact.
Undead beings could harbor malice too!
After all, undead beings such as wraiths and evil spirits were formed around the core of their own obsessions and residual malice.
Moreover, Lumian's spirit and consciousness were still protected by the golden mask of the Eggers family, remaining in a living state.
After a quick jog, guided by the pale-white flame of the human-shaped street lamps and the blazing white orb above, Lumian discovered a grand structure along the side of the cracked stone slabs.
It appeared to be a cathedral, entirely black and about fifty to sixty meters tall, but its upper half had already collapsed into the lower part.
Lumian concentrated, listening intently, and heard faint, strange sounds emanating from the grand but ruined cathedral.
It was as if someone was using a blunt sword to slice through flesh and saw through bones, causing a headache to the listener.
"I have another matter to resolve inside this cathedral," Lumian finally disclosed his intent to the Knight of Swords and the temperance faction demigod.
He then firmly added, "It should be quick."
He remembered what Madam Magician had said: the true danger of the Abscessed Hand would only manifest once all its parts were assembled, and currently, two parts were still in the City of Exiles Morora, so there was no need to worry about that.
The enemy he might face next could be the undead being creating the sound just heard.
"Alright," the Knight of Swords did not inquire about the specifics.
"Thank you," Lumian responded sincerely.

The Knight of Swords and the temperance faction demigod neither objected nor disengaged from Lumian's body, indicating their tacit approval to provide the necessary assistance when needed.
Lumian extinguished the blazing white orb hovering above his head to avoid provoking the undead within the dilapidated cathedral.
He transformed into a shadow, blending into the areas not illuminated by the pale-white flames, and silently infiltrated the building whose upper half had entirely collapsed inward.
From the shadows, Lumian saw columns thrust into the ground, a dome shattered into pieces, and a bird statue broken in half.
After winding through the ruins for a while, Lumian's path brightened suddenly.
Ten meters ahead on a crumbling wall, several bone torches burning with pale green flames were inserted, the dense darkness above streaming through a large hole created by the collapsed dome, blocked outside by this dim light.
Beneath the bone torches, a long table made of grayish-white stone was set up, upon which lay a half-corpse, head severed and vertically split open.
The corpse wore no clothes, its body bluish-black and swollen with decay, oozing yellowish-red pus everywhere.
It appeared significantly larger than a normal human, unclear whether it was a half-giant in life or merely bloated by post-mortem gasses.
Lumian recognized it instantly-this was the body of the Abscessed Hand!
It comprised the left half, including one hand and one foot.
In front of the Abscessed Hand's corpse stood a towering figure, about four meters tall. The figure's skin was pitch-black, etched with numerous sinister patterns, most of which had decayed, exposing bare, ghostly white bones or appearing as half-melted, viscous tissue.
At that moment, this figure, bent over, was slowly cutting into the half-corpse of the Abscessed Hand with an even larger pale-white leg bone, likely from another unknown source.
Lumian noticed two curved, tattered black goat horns growing from the figure's head, its profile resembling a fusion of human and goat features, becoming increasingly terrifying the longer he looked.
An undead being transformed from a Beyonder of the Devil pathway after death? Just as Lumian had this thought, he saw the goat-faced giant slice off a chunk of bluish-black decaying flesh and stuff it into its mouth, chewing vigorously, causing pale

yellow pus to splatter.
On the half-corpse of the Abscessed Hand, the decaying flesh writhed and grew, filling in the cuts made.
A cycle of one eating, the other growing? Lumian was pondering a plan to take the Abscessed Hand's corpse when the Devil-like undead suddenly turned around, looked towards the shadows where he was hiding, and spoke in an unintelligible language using a hollow, decayed voice.
Though he couldn't understand the words, Lumian felt a strange pulsation in his flesh, compelling him to leave his shadow form and revert to his undead appearance with the golden mask.
However, the decaying, goat-faced Devil did not take the opportunity to attack.
After two seconds, the voice of the Knight of Swords reached Lumian's ears: "It's asking: 'Do you need flesh?'"
Do you need flesh? Lumian was first stunned, then relieved that he had a translator.
Looking at the hunched-over, Devil-like giant undead, Lumian suddenly had a strange thought: *Is this considered making a deal with a Demon?*
Has the aftereffects from using the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction finally caught up with me?

Chapter 770: Egg

710 Egg

For a moment, Lumian was unsure whether the Authority Holder's Under-the-table Transaction, a Beyonder item from the Broker pathway, actually had negative effects.

On the one hand, encountering a deal with Demons and other evil beings surprisingly prevented a potential battle. Without this "negative effect," Lumian suspected he would have been attacked the instant he was spotted by the goat-faced Demon, instead of being asked if he needed flesh. This seemed like a manifestation of how a Shadow Merchant could reduce the malice from dangerous creatures and mysterious entities.

However, it was definitely wrong if this wasn't considered a negative effect. Dealing with a Demon wouldn't be simple or easy. It might even be very dangerous, even if the Demon was already dead.

After a few seconds of deliberation, Lumian, pointing to the half-body of the Abscessed Hand on the grayish-white stone table, asked, "I want it all. What must I give in return?"

He planned to gauge the difficulty of the transaction first. If it proved too challenging, he would ask for help from the temperance faction demigod to confront and collectively eliminate this decaying goat-faced Demon!

Having a deal offered by a Demon didn't mean you had to accept it!

As soon as Lumian spoke, he felt his body stiffen and a coldness spread within him.

He understood what was happening and didn't resist or struggle, then found himself involuntarily speaking in a gravelly, metallic voice, as if using dead vocal cords.

His words were repeated in an unknown language by the goat-faced giant, and every word struck a chill into Lumian's spirit, feeling as though they were piercing his Spirit Body.

Bent over and goat-faced, the black-skinned decaying Demon responded in the same hollow language, its voice echoing ominously.

One of the words seemed to grasp Lumian's Spirit Body and body as if by a giant hand.

If it weren't for his "dead" state and the protection of the Eggers family's golden mask, just this interaction alone could have severely harmed him.

Soon, the ethereal voice of the Knight of Swords resonated in his mind: "I want Farbauti dead!"

Farbauti? The Devil Monarch, Farbauti, the true form of

Naboredisley?
The terms of the deal require me to kill an ancient god? Lumian narrowed his eyes at the towering goat-faced devil, regaining control of his voice to say, "That's an ancient god. I can't do it. Change the terms."
If the goat-faced devil refused to change the terms, then there was no need for negotiation!
Facing an ancient god might be beyond me, but taking you down certainly wasn't!
It was just a matter of owing a favor to a demigod!
That debt could be repaid slowly over time!
It was unclear whether it was the Knight of Swords or the temperance faction demigod who then took control of Lumian's body, translating his words into a language the goat-faced Demon could understand.
This also brought Lumian a strange sensation.
The goat-faced Demon, capable of standing four to five meters tall but appearing only a bit over three meters due to its bent back, fell silent for a moment before speaking in a deep, hollow tone, "I want that egg."
Egg? Lumian muttered to himself in confusion.
He understood directly because the Knight of Swords had already translated it synchronously.
"Where is this egg?" Lumian inquired.
As a member of the temperance faction took control of his mouth to relay the question, the decaying goat-faced Demon let the massive thigh bone in its hand drop to the ground with a loud thud.
"In the palace," the goat-faced Demon answered simply, making the Knight of Swords' job of translating much easier.
This also made the Knight of Swords' translation job much easier.
Lumian asked, seeking confirmation, "The palace of Death?"
Could a former divine residence be extremely dangerous?
The goat-faced Demon's eyes, oozing blood and pus, shifted slightly.
"Yes."
An egg within Death's palace... Lumian hesitated between agreeing to the deal or just seizing it.
As he surveyed his surroundings, he further inquired, "What does this egg look like?"
While waiting for the member of the temperance faction to translate, Lumian noticed a broken statue by a half-buried stone pillar, with only parts of its body remaining.
It was vaguely recognizable as an avian statue, its feathers

seemingly woven from mystical patterns, pale-white and dim.
An avian statue... Lumian thought, connecting this with the egg the goat-faced Demon wanted.
Once the translation was finished and control of his mouth returned, he added, "A bird's egg?"
After about ten seconds, the goat-faced Demon dragged its pale thigh bone forward a few steps, which scraped against the ground, producing a grating sound.
The goat-faced Demon spoke slowly and intermittently, "Yes. It's large. Black, within flames."
It really is a bird's egg, and obviously from an abnormal mother...
Birds... Lumian suddenly remembered the prematurely born child they were tracking, associated with the Banshees in their full might.
They resembled birds, with claws and wings!
Although there are clear differences from this bird statue, they are at least all birds... Moreover, since there is an abnormal bird's egg inside Death's palace, it implies the existence of a mother, a mother in the mystical sense... Lumian vaguely grasped the reason Oxyto had conceived such a stillborn and cast it into the Underworld.
Was her goal also this egg, to use it to do something to the Underworld?
Whether integrating the realm of the dead in the Raklev region into her own Paramita or conducting a ritual to impregnate corpses and bear children, was it all for this purpose?
Sheesh, does she intend to merge the Underworld with her own Paramita?
That's quite ambitious, isn't it?
This is a legacy of a true god, a former divine kingdom!
But if Oxyto really succeeds, wouldn't the Great Mother be able to descend directly?
Even if she can't fully merge the Underworld just yet, just planting a seed is still a very dangerous thing for our world!
Lumian immediately asked the goat-faced Demon, "Have you seen a giant baby with bird claws?"
The decaying goat-faced Demon looked at Lumian but did not respond. It was unclear whether it hadn't seen such a thing, or if the influence of the Broker pathway was limited to the transaction itself.
Lumian fell silent for a few seconds before stating, "Deal!"
The goat-faced Demon's head moved almost imperceptibly. It turned and began dragging its pale thigh bone, step by step, back to the grayish-white stone table where the half-body of the

Abscessed Hand lay.
Lumian, lowering his voice, shared his recent thoughts with the Knight of Swords and the temperance faction demigod.
Knight of Swords Maric quickly responded, "Let's head to Death's palace right now.'
Seemingly to reassure Lumian, the Knight of Swords added, "You're wearing the Eggers family's mask. Many dangers in the Underworld will naturally avoid you. We only need to worry about anomalies like the boatman. And if Oxyto's monstrous child can get close to Death's palace, close to that bird's egg, then we should be able to as well. Even with the premature birth and the powers inherited from Oxyto, it's at most equivalent to a Sequence 4."
Upon hearing the Knight of Swords say so much in one breath, Lumian pondered and said, "Its state of existence and birth ritual are quite unique. It might be able to harness some of the Underworld's power. Even if it hasn't reached the Angelic level due to being premature, we must treat it as a Sequence 3 demigod in the corresponding environment.'
After all, this was a baby born through the integration of Paramita and the spirit realm, facilitated by Lake Dalsh. And this baby had undergone gestation within a corpse, birth post-mortem, and then returned to its original form through a process of mutation and integration.
It absolutely couldn't be considered a living creature, for living beings would instantly die in the Underworld.
"Yes," the Knight of Swords answered succinctly.
Under the pale glow of a few bone torches mounted on the broken wall, Lumian asked the two members of the temperance faction within him, "If we continue along the path we were on, into the depths of the darkness, will we reach Death's palace?"
Lumian remembered that the Knight of Swords had mentioned reading many notes from the descendants of Death.
Before the Knight of Swords could reply, the goat-faced Demon standing at the gray stone table suddenly lifted the large pale thigh bone.
It used the bone to point toward a dark, deep hole that had been smashed open by a dome-shaped stone block near the broken statue.
That seemed to lead to the dark cathedral's basement.
Lumian paused, then blurted out, "You mean, this leads directly to Death's palace?"
Based on the Knight of Swords' explanations and what he had seen earlier, Lumian believed Death's palace was situated at the bottom of the dark Underworld. One would have to keep heading

downward, deep into the ground, to reach it.
But since it was a descent, jumping directly into the seemingly bottomless "basement" might also be feasible.
Emperor Roselle once said, "All roads lead to Trier!"
The decaying goat-faced Demon nodded slowly.
It was only then that Lumian realized: This fellow understands my Intis language! *Why did I even bother getting a translator? Is a Demon still a Demon even after death?*
Lumian didn't waste any time confronting the decaying goat-faced Demon. He ran a few steps to the edge of the dark, vast hole.
He formed a clump of blazing white flame and placed it at the edge of the hole, illuminating some of the interior: massive stone pillars, blackened wood racks, collapsed stone slabs, and a winding staircase extending downward, disappearing into the darkness.
"No problem," the Knight of Swords conveyed the judgment on behalf of the temperance faction demigod. "It leads to Death's palace."
Without hesitation, Lumian jumped onto the partially collapsed staircase.
Instead of running down the stairs in the usual way, he jumped back and forth between stone pillars, wood racks, staircases, and walls in a linear free-fall.
During this process, Lumian occasionally transformed into a blazing white flame spear to leap over completely collapsed parts without footholds and at other times turned into a shadow creature to navigate around special areas.
The surrounding darkness seemed to hide something, something even the blazing white light couldn't illuminate, but Lumian ignored it, pretending not to notice.
After descending for an indeterminate amount of time, Lumian's feet finally touched the ground.
In the light of the blazing white flame, he saw that the area was littered with broken bones, some white, some yellow-brown, and some dark brown.
Not too far from Lumian, a deep black stone wall stood, set with a heavy wooden door large enough for a giant to pass through.
Lumian walked up to the door, bent over, and extended his palms, beginning to push outward with all his strength.
His instincts told him that beyond this door lay Death's palace.

Chapter 771: Pale-White Nation

Amidst the heavy tearing sound of a long-unmoved wooden board, the chestnut-brown door slowly opened outward.

The first thing Lumian noticed was the dim light, unlike the darkness typical of the deeper parts of the Underworld, emanating not from golden humanoid streetlamps but from all objects ahead.

He then got a clear view of the exterior.

There lay a cluster of palaces half-sunken into the void, with a majestic main hall, several high towers, and aerial corridors connecting them.

Deeper into the palace complex, the structures seemed to sink further into the void, while those on the periphery stood solidly on a barren wilderness.

Even so, the main hall in the core area towered much higher than the rest of the buildings.

Now, most of the structures were completely collapsed, leaving only ruins and broken walls. The relatively intact palaces and towers were concentrated on the periphery, with the only visibly towering structure in the core area being the main hall and its four attached spires.

At this moment, whether it was the broken palace complex or the surrounding wilderness and the sky above, all had faded to a dim, pale white, enveloping and infusing the entire world with pallor.

They brought light.

This pale-white world still retained a few other colors-gold embedded on the surfaces of buildings and the black at the bottom of the palace complex representing the void.

The latter had two other sources: one was the silently falling illusory dark River Styx from above, cascading behind the main hall, and the other was a creature long enough to be described in hundreds of meters, nestled among the four spires atop the grand main hall.

It was an exaggeratedly large bird, its wings woven from pale-white flames and mystical patterns, quietly sprawling on the roof of the main hall. Many of its pale-white fiery feathers had shed, revealing the black, decaying skin underneath.

Despite the considerable distance, and even with just a few fleeting glances, Lumian couldn't help but feel his "death" accelerating.

He lowered his head to look at his hands and found his already pale, dull, and withered undead skin now marked with spreading patches of blue-black decay.

These marks moved slowly, deepening continuously.

Moreover, his clothes were also beginning to be "infected" by the

pallor of this world, all colors turning dim.
"What kind of monster is that?" Lumian dared not gaze at the distant giant bird anymore and could only look directly at the palace complex itself.
After a few seconds, the increasingly ethereal voice of the Knight of Swords, Maric, rang out: "It might be the corpse of Gregrace."
Gregrace? The Phoenix Ancestor, the ancient Death among the eight ancient gods of the Second Epoch? Lumian blurted out in astonishment, "Why would Her body be here?"
After posing the question, Lumian felt it was somewhat meaningless.
This was the Underworld, and it was not strange for any deceased's body to appear here. The Phoenix Ancestor-ancient Death-had perished before the Underworld anomaly.
On the other hand, the absence of the Eggers family's Death's corpse, hidden somewhere, was an anomaly.
Lumian didn't expect the Knight of Swords to actually answer his question.
"It might be that the ancestor of the Eggers family, the former Death, placed it here."
Uh... Does that mean the Eggers family's Death not only acquired the Beyonder characteristics of the Phoenix Ancestor Gregrace but also brought Her body back to the Underworld, hiding it somewhere in the palace complex? *How did She, no-it end up on top of the palace? Is it just a corpse?* Was it placed there initially? Or did the anomaly in the Underworld come from this ancient god's corpse? With the reigning Death dead, has the ancient god's corpse reanimated?
Lumian suddenly had some thoughts.
At that moment, he heard the Knight of Swords add, "Sharron just saw the egg."
The egg? The one the goat-faced Demon wants? Is Sharron referring to the temperance faction demigod within me? Lumian's heart leaped with joy before he quickly asked, "Where is the egg?"
"Below the belly of what seems to be the corpse of the Phoenix Ancestor. It has a pitch-black shell and is engulfed in pale-white flames, about a meter in diameter,' the Knight of Swords briefly described the egg.
Protected by the corpse of the ancient Death? Lumian's scalp tingled at the thought.
How am I supposed to retrieve it?
This might as well be no different from slaying the Devil Monarch, Farbauti!
Of course, for those of high stature, a living ancient god and a

Beyonder-characteristic-lacking one reduced to a decaying corpse were not on the same level; the difficulty of these tasks was as different as heaven and the abyss. But for Lumian, they were equally insurmountable, both falling under the category of "impossible even with self-sacrifice."
Son of a sow, that goat-faced fellow really is a Demon turned undead!
Fine, if it can't be completed, then so be it. Just finish off the contractor as if there was no task at all!
As malicious thoughts spread throughout his body, the Knight of Swords added, "It's not entirely impossible to retrieve the egg. The state of the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse is somewhat strange."
Strange state of the corpse? Aren't there only two states for a corpse, eternal rest and reanimation? Lumian dared not use his own eyes to inspect the decaying corpse of the ancient Death, Gregrace, and could only inquire of Sharron, the only one present who could withstand looking at the body of an ancient god to some extent, "What's strange about it?"
The one responding was still the Knight of Swords.
"It's asleep, the kind of deep sleep that's hard to awaken from.
"This doesn't align with the current state of this Pale-White Nation."
Asleep? Dead and transformed, yet still needing sleep? Lumian frowned slightly and asked, "Why does that not align with the current state here?"
The Knight of Swords paused a few seconds before explaining, "From what we've seen, one of the reasons for the original anomaly in the Underworld was the reanimation of the Phoenix Ancestor. It destroyed Death's palace, killed all of Death's Blessed present, and turned this place into a pale-white nation.
"We've encountered a few demigods from the Death domain. Since the Underworld anomaly, they could still manage some affairs in the Underworld, even enter directly, but none dared to venture deep into the Underworld to search for the treasures within Death's palace. Their instincts told them it was too dangerous, absolutely not to be approached.
"But Sharron didn't have such a premonition for danger, so she agreed to come here."
That means, for a long time after the Underworld anomaly, the body of the Phoenix Ancestor still roamed this pale-white nation, keeping the high-ranked beings of the Death domain at bay, but now, it lies asleep... Lumian found the oddity from Maric's description.
"When was the last time a high-ranking Beyonder of the Death

pathway felt danger approaching deep into the Underworld?" Lumian tried to determine the approximate timeframe.
"I don't know," the Knight of Swords answered promptly.
Don't know... It seems then, that the Phoenix Ancestor's body has only fallen asleep in recent years. Otherwise, the high-ranked Beyonders of the Death pathway entering the Underworld would have discovered that it's not so dangerous here anymore, and might have attempted exploration, not leaving without a trace nor without any news spreading... *What happened in recent years?* Lumian thought, unable to suppress his complaint.
"Why did the Eggers family's Death bring back the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse, leaving such a huge risk? As a true god, He could have directly destroyed this corpse!"
The Knight of Swords responded to Lumian's complaint, "The Underworld was established by the ancient Death in the spirit world, and as an ancient god, She wasn't limited to the powers of the Death pathway when She created the Underworld.
"It might not have been easy for the Eggers family's Death to initially take control of the Underworld; He might have needed to use the corpse of the Phoenix Ancestor. By the time He truly took control, His state might have changed, no longer concerned with such trivial matters."
Does this mean the Eggers family's Death went mad later? The Underworld wasn't naturally formed, it was created by the ancient Death, Gregrace... Such a powerful ancient god, no wonder She could have undergone reanimation... Lumian reflected inwardly.
The Knight of Swords, sensing his sigh, simply said, "It's said that even among those mad ancient gods, the Phoenix Ancestor, Gregrace, was particularly fond of stirring things up, much like the Blood Emperor Alista Tudor of the Fourth Epoch."
Now that you put it that way, I can understand perfectly... Lumian's gaze continuously shifted among the pale sky, the wilderness, and the collapsed palace complex, pondering whether to seize the opportunity of the ancient god's corpse being asleep to steal the enormous black egg burning with pale-white flames.
Suddenly, he spotted a figure still capable of movement.
It was a creature with a human head but the body of a giant bird.
The creature's limbs were bent, with nails that flickered with a cold light; its back sported wings covered in half pale-white, half chestnut-brown feathers. The development of its head seemed incomplete, resembling several infant heads slowly merging together.
"Oxyto's premature child? It's indeed here!" Lumian recognized the creature's identity.

That was the target he and the members of the temperance faction had been tracking!
At that moment, Oxyto's monstrous child was flapping its wings, continuously circling and stealthily drawing closer to the sleeping ancient god's corpse.
Its target appeared to be the enormous black egg pressed beneath the corpse!
"We must stop it! Sharron will handle cursing and controlling it, and we'll take care of the attack!"
The voice of the Knight of Swords echoed in Lumian's mind. "Okay."
This time, Lumian didn't hesitate and sprinted out from the base of the pitch-black cathedral.
As soon as he stepped into that pale-white nation, his entire being was dyed pale-white, devoid of any additional colors.
This caused him to shiver both body and soul, wanting nothing more than to kneel down on the ground, lying prostrate and motionless.
Silently, Lumian drew the Sword of Courage.
The blade, now color-eroded by the pale-whiteness, suddenly ignited with a bright white flame tinged with blue.

Chapter 772: Curse

Filled with the courage to battle against the heavens and to strike at true gods, Lumian stood straight and tall, unflinchingly facing the ruined palaces within the Pale-White Nation.

Just then, his eyelids dropped uncontrollably, shielding his eyes.

Almost simultaneously, the voice of the Knight of Swords resonated once more in his ear: "Our target is Oxyto's child, not the ancient god's corpse."

This was to prevent Lumian from looking directly across the pale-white wilderness at the corpse of the ancient death god.

"There's nothing to fear!" Lumian quickly responded.

His voice, once it left his mouth, was also "infected" by the pallor governing this world, becoming weak, hollow, and devoid of emotion.

The Knight of Swords earnestly advised, "But this will affect our battle with Oxyto's child; we must resolve it quickly. Once that's done, you can do whatever you want."

Lumian fell momentarily quiet before responding, "Okay."

Honestly, wearing the Eggers family's golden mask and in his undead state, Lumian felt a bloodline-based fear and an awe towards the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse atop Death's palace, which the courage did not dispel and even somewhat weakened, creating a balance.

Otherwise, Lumian, wielding the Sword of Courage, would not have been so agreeable!

Immediately, Lumian ignited into a bright white flame, transforming into a long spear of light, hurling towards the still-intact buildings at the edge of the palace complex.

As the fiery spear cut through the sky, it too was eroded by the pallor, dissipating and dimming even faster, which meant Lumian only managed half the intended distance.

Finally, as the pale-white light extinguished, Lumian appeared mid-air, plummeting straight towards the ground.

He landed softly on the wilderness, making only a slight sound, and all around was deadly silence.

The bright, blazing spear of flame took to the air once again.

After repeating this five times, Lumian finally reached a high tower adorned with numerous golden patterns and stood at its top, with the figure of Oxyto's monstrous child becoming clearer in his sight.

Although the other did not display the potentially incomplete Mythical Creature form, merely seeing the bent human limbs, a head formed from several merged infant heads, and wings

stretching from the torso with half pale-white, half chestnut-brown feathers, Lumian felt dizzy, accompanied by spasmodic pain.
Additionally, something inside him seemed to be calling, slowly gathering towards his abdomen.
It was the bloodline of Omebella!
Lumian felt no fear from this.
Wasn't this inevitable?
In the next instant, two figures materialized before him.
One figure wore a black Gothic-style court dress, complete with a matching petite bonnet and her light golden hair neatly bundled up; the other, slightly disheveled, donned a traditional black vest over a white shirt.
Temperance faction demigod Sharron and a member of the temperance faction, the holder of the Knight of Swords Minor Arcana tarot card, Maric!
As they approached their primary target, they finally detached from Lumian's body, ready to battle.
Indeed, both Sharron and Maric bore colors derived from the impressions left by Lumian, not truly manifested, appearing pale-white and dim.
Moreover, their bodies were transparent and ghostly, in a state of Wraiths.
If not so, they would have instantly died, becoming real undead creatures devoid of consciousness.
The monstrous child of Oxyto, hovering close to the belly of the ancient death god's corpse, sensed the proximity of Lumian and the others. From a distance of two or three kilometers, it half-turned its body and looked over with its twelve clustered eyes.
Lumian immediately felt the protective essence of his mind and consciousness, shielded by the Eggers family's golden mask, along with the life force deep within, showing signs of disintegration.
In his eyes, the temperance faction demigod named Sharron, using the reflective mirror effect of the pure gold surface, flickered twice between the crumbling palace and the high tower, coming within three to four hundred meters of the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse.
She opened her mouth towards Oxyto's child and emitted a piercing scream.
This was Lumian's first time hearing Sharron's voice.
Eroded by the pallor during its journey of over two thousand meters, the sound reached Lumian's ears as a faint echo, almost like an illusion.
Oxyto's child didn't see it that way. The feathers on its wings-half

pale-white, half chestnut-brown-rapidly fell off. One by one, the eyes on its face burst open, the flesh on its uncovered body festering down to the bone, as if struck by a potent curse!
Seeing this, Lumian, fearless, transformed once again into the fiery spear of flame and hurled himself at the creature. Meanwhile, the Knight of Swords flickered forward on various reflective surfaces.
Oxyto's child let out a mournful howl.
Though distant and further muted by the dense pallor within Death's palace, the sound was soft when it reached Lumian, yet it still made him dizzy for a moment, a bloody stench of decay filling his nostrils, involuntarily causing him to revert from his fiery spear form.
With this howl, Oxyto's monstrous child morphed into a writhing, twisted, huge pale-white bud. The exploded eyeballs, festering flesh, and fallen feathers were all absorbed into the bud.
In a blink, the bud blossomed, sopping wet, and produced two children.
One was intertwined in pitch black and dark red, its sores festering rapidly until it stilled, turned pale, and fell to the ground; the other was an unscathed, massive bird-clawed monstrosity.
Through this transformation, Oxyto's monstrous child shed the curse and was reborn.
But Sharron seized the moment, her figure reflected within its clustered twelve eyes.
Oxyto's monstrous child froze mid-air, just a few dozen meters from the Death's main hall where the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse lay.
In its twelve gleaming beautiful eyes, the figure of Sharron, wearing her petite bonnet, flickered in and out of view, soon illuminated by intense, bright white light.
A flamboyant spear of flame shot forth, striking an ancient, partially collapsed tower nearby.
As the light dispersed, Lumian, single-handedly wielding the Sword of Courage, appeared.
He did not hesitate or feel fear. Despite the dizziness and pain in his head, his eyes turned an iron-black.
This iron-black shade emerged only to be eroded by the pallor, harmonizing completely with this nation.
This did not impede Lumian's observation of his target's weaknesses, though all he saw was pallor.
Compelled, Lumian relied on his Hunter kin senses to detect weaknesses, picking the most appealing and battle-raging spot among those pale hues.

Once again, he became the increasingly pale and dimming fiery spear of flame, positioning himself above Oxyto's monstrous child.
His figure outlined; he grasped the Sword of Courage, blazing with bright white and blue flames, and plummeted like a boulder towards the body of Oxyto's monstrous child.
As they drew close, Lumian struck at the monstrous bird-clawed infant's abdomen with his broadsword, now tainted with pallor.
He was using his Cull.
Before this, the Knight of Swords, Maric, appeared atop the half-collapsed tower, slipping on a ring carved in the shape of the sun god's bird.
In his hands, he quickly formed a lance as clear as pure sunlight.
This caused the nearby pallor to fade slightly, erasing shadows and causing the Wraith-like state of the Knight of Swords to melt inch by inch. Droplets of dim liquid fell like wax in a fire.
The droplets evaporated quickly, leaving behind a bit of dust that slowly dispersed.
Enduring the melting of his right side, Maric's expression twisted into one of madness as he hurled the lance of sunlight towards Oxyto's monstrous child.
Considering that Oxyto was a Shaman King of the Moon pathway, the temperance faction had prepared a Sun pathway Sealed Artifact in advance, which unexpectedly proved useful at this time!
This Sealed Artifact, both in effect and trait, would bring significant harm to the Wraiths.
The clean and bright spear of flame became an anomaly in this pale world.
It too was being eroded, but it was also dispersing the pallor, appearing to be able to strike the body of the monster child before Lumian's Sword of Courage could.
Although the monstrous child of Oxyto was possessed by the demigod Sharron and forcibly controlled, it wasn't completely turned into a statue to be slaughtered at will.
It struggled against the influence of the Wraith, as its "reborn" body slowly contracted, seemingly returning to an embryonic state, seeking the comfort of its mother's embrace, while unleashing its own Paramita.
The pale-white wilderness quickly engulfed the surrounding ruined palaces and the half-collapsed tower, also drawing the bodies of a few Blessed of Death who had died in this area into its scope.
In the deathly silence, a horrific giant snake, bearing only bones and some rotting flesh with exaggerated wings, sprung from the collapsed palace into the air, blocking the path of the Knight of

Swords' spear of sunlight.
The blinding sunlight burst forth, filling Lumian's eyes.
His strike with the Sword of Courage did not slow down; he firmly slashed downwards.
The sunlight blackened his pale, dim skin, sparking a burning smoke.
A soft "clang" sounded as Lumian's Sword of Courage struck the head of the winged giant snake, splitting the target, which had become exceptionally fragile after absorbing most of the sunlight damage.
In a barely audible silence, the snake's bones either evaporated or shattered, completely losing their support and falling like rain to the ground.
With the help of the giant bone snake blocking a strike for him, Oxyto's monstrous child controlled by Sharron contracted even more fiercely.
Its half pale-white, half chestnut-brown wings and bent limbs had merged with its body, forming a sphere, with only its head, formed from several merged infant heads, still visible.
Its Paramita then encompassed the entire main hall of Death and the corpse of the Phoenix Ancestor.

Chapter 773: Cries

The pale-white light quickly engulfed the bird-clawed infant's Paramita, rendering the spread-out wilderness dull and indistinguishable from the surrounding ruined palaces, towers, and corridors.

This Paramita lost the features distinguishing the interior from the exterior, effectively withering and dying.

As the bone serpent collapsed, Lumian fell straight down, landing amidst the broken walls and debris scattered across the wilderness.

With a forceful bend of his waist and a forward flip, he landed firmly, not relying on his burning-white spear form to avoid the damage from such a fall.

In this pale-white nation, even the rules of the world seemed corrupted; falling from fifty meters felt no different than jumping from a five-meter building.

At this moment, the monstrous child of Oxyto retracted its head into the pale-white flesh sphere, forcing the temperance faction demigod Sharron to detach and hover in mid-air.

In the area near the main hall of Death, five or six terrifying undead creatures, influenced by Paramita, shakily rose to their feet.

Among them were two giant serpents with feathered wings and hairy corpses, a bloated, rotten giant, a humanoid mountain of white bones, and a woman with hair like thick snakes and a face two-thirds decayed.

Each of these risen dead, summoned by the bird-clawed infant, exerted immense pressure on Knight of Swords Maric.

As a Sequence 5 of the Prisoner pathway, he knew he couldn't control these corpses; attempting to wake them would only result in his own immediate dismemberment.

The undead, immense and horrifying, locked onto the temperance faction demigod, Sharron, but their movements were sluggish, as if hindered by an unseen force, unable to attack immediately.

Sharron, too, could control corpses and command the dead, and she was a true demigod with a higher rank than the premature bird-clawed infant!

Sharron's divided focus to influence the former Blessed of Death gave Oxyto's monstrous child a chance for rebirth. The pale-white flesh sphere bloomed like a flower, revealing a giant baby cleansed by pure water, while the sphere itself withered rapidly, turning pale and decaying as it fell to the ground.

Just as the giant baby spread its half-pale, half-chestnut wings,

Sharron abandoned her control over the corpses.
In her pale-white eyes, the floating bird-clawed infant was reflected.
She opened her mouth and let out a scream that seemed to come from the depths of her soul.
The giant baby froze, instantly transforming into a lamb covered in pale fur. Unable to fly or use any Beyonder abilities, it plummeted towards the ground, towards Lumian, who stood with the Sword of Courage.
Transfiguration Curse!
Without the monstrous child's support, Paramita began to collapse. The risen dead lost the foundation of their existence, gradually halting their movements and toppling over in the ruins.
The lamb covered in pale-white fur seemed corrupted from within; as it fell, its skin split, sprouting half-pale, half-chestnut feathers, and its belly swelled, as if nurturing new life.
No creature could escape the fate of being corrupted and nurturing new life, not even an ordinary lamb!
This was a trait of the Madame pathway, and the Transfiguration Curse could not strip corresponding Beyonders of these traits!
Sharron never expected to resolve Oxyto's premature child with just the Transfiguration Curse. Seizing the opportunity, she let her pale-white figure reflect in the mutated lamb's eyes.
The lamb's swelling belly began to slow, and the mutation caused by the corruption became less rapid.
It continued to plummet towards the ground.
Lumian, standing on the ground, looked up with a smile, raising the blue-hued blazing white Sword of Courage.
As the lamb entered his attack range, a spear of pure, intense sunlight shot from the half-collapsed tower.
Knight of Swords Maric, enduring significant pain and damage, once again projected the spear that illuminated the pale-white world.
This time. the bird-clawed infant. still in lamb form. could not evade or find a helper to block the spear. It could only watch as the golden spear of sunlight pierced its abdomen and exploded.
At this moment, as the scorching white sunlight engulfed the target, Sharron used Lumian's eyes and the pure gold in the nearby ruins to Mirror Jump away from the bright, sunlit, and fading pale area.
Although the lamb's body shielded her from the direct harm of the sunlight explosion, she, as a spirit-like Beyonder, still suffered significant impact.
When she reappeared in a golden pattern embedded in a wall

hundreds of meters away, her figure had thinned noticeably, dripping waxy liquid like sweat.
Lumian stood close to the pale-white lamb, filled with courage, not dodging, but standing firmly, welcoming the spreading sunlight.
Wearing the Eggers family's golden mask, his entire body ignited, blackening and melting like a candle, bringing extreme pain.
Fortunately, he was not at the explosion's core, most of the damage falling on the bird-clawed infant, with Sharron taking some as well.
Otherwise, the sunlight spear might have purified him in one blow.
The Sword of Courage also absorbed half the damage, making his injuries not as severe as they appeared.
Clenching his teeth, Lumian advanced instead of retreating, running towards the falling bird-clawed infant with the eroded white broadsword in hand.
With a faint thud, the half-melted, ghastly pale lamb crashed onto the shattered stones.
Lumian arrived a second later, his eyes turning from iron-black to pale-white.
He swung the Sword of Courage with both hands.
Bright white and blue flames flared, the sharp sword striking the lamb's chest and abdomen.
The explosion was not loud, but the flames and the violent shockwave lifted the surrounding rubble, tearing a jagged hole in the lamb's chest and abdomen.
Boom! Boom!
Lumian swung the sword twice more, splitting the bird-clawed infant's lamb form into charred fragments.
The charred pieces were immediately eroded by the pale-white color, bringing a sense of dark, dead silence.
Just as Lumian was about to strike again, the pale lamb's abdomen exploded, scattering rotten flesh and liquid with a strange aura.
Instinctively, Lumian slashed the void ahead with the Sword of Courage, cutting through everything there.
Boom! Bright white flames and a violent shockwave formed a solid wall, blocking the rotten flesh and evil liquid.
As the pale lamb's abdomen exploded, a small, phantom figure with bird claws and wings, covered in a layer of pure water, flew out, heading straight for the black bird egg beneath the ancient Death's corpse.
This time, the bird-clawed infant, reduced to a phantom, was no longer cautious, no longer circling.
Knight of Swords Maric could not throw the spear of sunlight

again, as it would cause his severely injured body to dissolve in the light.
Instead, he opened his arms, summoning a divine pillar of clean flame from the sky, aiming at the phantom heading for the main hall of Death.
The bird-clawed infant's figure first disappeared, then reappeared, evading the divine pillar's attack, but was immediately locked by Sharron's pale-white eyes.
Sharron transformed into a dim, stiff doll, encasing herself in layers of ice.
Simultaneously, layers of crystalline ice emerged around the bird-clawed infant, briefly fixing it in place, preventing its disappearance or progress.
The bird-clawed infant raised its head, letting out a howling wail within the ice cage.
The ice cage silently shattered.
The bird-clawed infant's body, covered in clear, pure water, splashed towards the ancient Death's corpse, forming droplets of faint golden liquid.
These droplets, drawn by an unseen force, converged into a river, carrying the bird-clawed infant towards the black bird egg burning with pale-white flames.
Seeing this, Lumian instinctively wanted to avoid the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse. He leaned back, raised his arm, and hurled the Sword of Courage.
The broadsword, eroded to pale but blazing with white and blue flames, flew like a conscious missile, covering hundreds of meters, leaving a trail of flames in the air, and striking the bird-clawed infant.
Locked on!
Rumble!
The sky near the black bird egg erupted with expanding white flames, forming a mushroom cloud.
Silently, charred shadowy fragments fell from the expanding flames and cloud, like a rain of dust.
The dust turned pale before touching the ground, some blown by the wind onto the black bird egg.
At that moment, Lumian heard an illusory shattering sound and felt his Reaper potion fully digest.
He had no time to rejoice as his mind and consciousness, protected by the Eggers familv golden mask, were overwhelmed bv fear and dread.
He lowered his head, knelt to the ground, and hugged himself, trembling.

He only wanted to obey the orders of the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse.
As an undead, he lost his courage, his vision darkening.
Thump, splash... In extreme fear, Lumian heard the sound of a heartbeat and flowing blood.
It came from nearby, within this Pale-White Nation.
It resonated strangely with Lumian.
Faintly, Lumian heard a mournful cry: "Child!
"My child!"
Who is your child? Who are you? Lumian instinctively wondered.
The mournful cry continued:
"My child, where are you?"
The voice paused and then rose slightly:
"Omebella, where are you?"

Chapter 774: Resonance

The mournful cry seemed to draw closer: "My child, Omebella, where are you?"

Hearing the name "Omebella," Lumian shuddered violently, snapping out of his fear-induced daze.

Who? Who is looking for Omebella? *Why are they looking for Omebella?*

As he wondered, Lumian noticed the surrounding area growing darker, with a sense of confinement and imprisonment.

He reached out, his hands brushing against a cold, hard "wall."

He pressed himself against it, trying to peer through its cracks.

The "wall" was pitch black but semi-transparent, and Lumian could faintly see the pale-white sky, the collapsed towers, and the shattered palaces.

He also saw Sharron, the temperance faction demigod dressed in a small bonnet and a Gothic dress, floating nearby. She extended her hand, summoning the Sword of Courage, now pale from erosion.

Beyond Sharron, he looked down at the rubble-strewn ruins. A pale figure in tattered clothes was kneeling, bent over as if to crawl.

The figure was trembling all over, struggling to raise its head and straighten up.

It was a face wearing a golden mask-his own face!

Me?

If I'm outside, then who is here?

Already half-conscious, Lumian felt even more bewildered.

Almost simultaneously, he saw his outside self, with charred skin peeling off, sprouting half-pale, half-chestnut feathers. His belly writhed visibly, while wheat, mushrooms, and flowers grew from the sunlit wounds.

Silently, Sharron leaped onto the golden mask and appeared before Lumian, placing the Sword of Courage into his hands.

The surge of courage instantly dispelled the fear suppressing his mind and consciousness, making his vision pale-white and no longer pitch black.

The sense of confinement and entrapment around him also dissipated.

He raised his head higher, no longer seeing himself or using a top-down perspective.

His gaze fell on the black egg under the ancient Death's corpse at the top of the main hall.

He instinctively believed he had just been inside the egg, observing the outside through its shell!

No, it wasn't me inside the black egg, but the part of me that lost

courage and was subdued by the ancient god's aura resonating with the creature inside the egg, sharing its senses.
So, I "saw" the scene outside the shell, "heard" the mournful cry for Omebella, and showed signs of corruption!
Thinking this, Lumian quickly looked down at his body, seeing the feathers falling off, mixed with wheat, mushrooms, and flowers.
They had all lost their color, turning pale and dim.
Lumian also saw his belly flattening, feeling his blood, meant to be solid as a deceased, flowing throughout his body.
Suddenly, he understood why Oxyto risked so much to nurture a fetus with undead traits and an aura of the Underworld.
Even with just a bit of Omebella's bloodline, suppressed by the ancient god's corpse, he could resonate and interact with the creature inside the black egg. How much more could the bird-clawed infant, with more of the Great Mother's gifts, fused with Paramita and the Underworld, and perhaps also with Omebella's bloodline!
If we hadn't taken out Oxyto's premature child in time, it might have used the resonance and interaction to merge with the creature inside the black egg, controlling it from the source, or completing its catalysis!
Hmm, the premature birth meant the bird-clawed infant lacked the rank and traits, requiring extreme caution. Even if it reached the final step, there was a high chance of failure...
Now, the question is, why could the creature inside the black egg hear the 'Mother's' call for Omebella...
Who exactly is Omebella's 'Mother'? It can't really be the Great Mother, can it? Isn't She always outside the barrier?
What is the relationship between the creature inside the black egg and Omebella?
As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian suddenly heard a faint cracking sound.
He looked up in astonishment, seeing the pale-white flames burning on the black egg dim significantly and peel away. The black egg itself developed a noticeable fissure.
It seemed to be disintegrating to some extent.
The next second, the entire Pale-White Nation began to tremble. A deathly aura from the black egg, where the ancient Death's corpse lay, started to emerge.
Even with the Sword of Courage in hand, Lumian couldn't help but freeze, trembling.
The surrounding palaces and towers, whether in ruins or half-collapsed, began to shake violently as if struck by an earthquake.
A thought flashed through Lumian's mind: The Phoenix Ancestor

Gregrace's corpse is awakening... Run! Escape!
He shouted this in his mind but couldn't turn his body or take a single step.
The temperance faction demigod Sharron grabbed him, and in his eyes reflected the dim figure of the Knight of Swords, who looked much fainter than before.
Cracks appeared in the pale-white sky, extending towards the trembling ground. An overwhelming sense of dread was rapidly accumulating at the top of the main hall of Death.
Sharron, holding Lumian, initiated Spirit World Traversal.
This could be used in the Underworld but would trigger retribution.
Countless indescribable limbs reached out from the void, grabbing at the swiftly moving Sharron.
Sharron endured the damage from these limbs, continuing to head towards the pitch-black cathedral at the edge of the Pale-white Nation.
Her body ignited with pale-white flames, directly burning her spirit, causing clumps of powder to fall continuously.
Sharron could no longer sustain it any more than three seconds, interrupting the Spirit World Traversal and falling onto the pale-white wilderness outside the palace of Death, nearly a kilometer from the pitch-black cathedral.
Holding the Sword of Courage, Lumian, now outside Death's palace complex, no longer felt as afraid. He immediately pointed at himself, indicating for Sharron to possess him.
At the same time, he saw numerous jagged cracks rapidly spreading from behind, revealing a bottomless darkness, spheres wrapped in blood-red substance, and mountains filled with tombs...
Feeling achill within him, Lumian quickly ignited in blazing white flames, transforming into a magnificent spear, and launched towards the edge of the Pale-White Nation.
Above, below, and on all sides, countless cracks chased after him like shattered glass. Behind him, from the direction of the palace, a heavy sound emerged.
Amid the pale erosion, the flaming spear disappeared and reappeared twice.
Finally, Lumian escaped the Pale-White Nation, landing in front of the towering pitch-black cathedral.
Here, only the underground portion of the cathedral was visible, resembling a massive mountain.
Lumian passed through the heavy wooden doors, once again transforming into a flaming spear and launched upwards.
When the flames dispersed, he sheathed the Sword of Courage,

climbing upwards using the collapsed stairs, peeling walls, and broken pillars, repeatedly jumping between them, sometimes leaping across support-less areas as a flaming spear.
Before long, the pitch-black cathedral began to shake violently. The already precarious corridors, stairs, walls, and pillars started to crack and fall.
Seeing himself about to be crushed and buried by the collapsing building, Lumian prepared to draw the Sword of Courage to carve out an escape route.
At this moment, he was surprised to find the stones and pillars above him seemed to have a life of their own, avoiding him and continuing to fall past his sides.
In such a dangerous situation, Lumian remained unharmed.
He guessed Sharron provided some help, not wasting any time, and continued his ascent, repeating the process.
After an unknown amount of time, the violent shaking abruptly stopped.
Lumian didn't relax, maintaining his pace and rhythm until he sawa pale green light above.
A blazing white spear shot out from the dark hole within the half-collapsed church.
With the flames dispersing, Lumian's figure appeared, standing firmly on the cracked stone slab.
Next to a broken wall embedded with several bone torches, a tall Demon with a human-goat hybrid face slowly turned, dragging a white bone leg.
At that moment, Lumian realized he hadn't retrieved the black egg, failing the Demon's commission.
Instantly, anger surged within him: Was this a task I could complete?
You were sending me to my death! Truly a Demon's commission! Fine, since completing the task is no longer an option, I have only one choice: destroy the commissioner!
Despite these thoughts, Lumian only reached into the Traveler's Bag, preparing to draw the Sword of Courage, without intending to fight immediately.
He was concerned that the ancient Death's corpse's awakening would cause mutations to spread here, preferring to leave the depths of the Underworld as soon as possible, especially given the unknown strength of the goat-faced Demon.
Hunched over, the goat-faced Demon staggered in front of Lumian.
It stared at Lumian silently before speaking in a hollow, decayed voice.
This time, it used Dutanese: "You've taken that egg for yourself!"

Before it finished speaking, the goat-faced Demon straightened its four or five-meter-tall body and swung the white bone leg at Lumian.

Chapter 775: Cunning

As the goat-faced Devil approached and stared at him, Lumian's hand was already gripping the hilt of the Sword of Courage.

When the white bone leg came crashing down, he swiftly drew the iron-black sword, burning with a bright white and blue flame, and met the attack head-on.

Clang!

The clash echoed loudly, and Lumian's palm split open, spilling blackened, coagulated blood.

The immense force from the goat-faced Demon's strike made him lose his grip on the Sword of Courage, sending him flying and crashing into a pile of rubble.

The goat-faced Demon stepped over the fallen sword in two strides, standing before Lumian and raising the bone leg again.

Suddenly, in its blood- and pus-filled eyes, the figure of Sharron, the temperance faction demigod, appeared. Its raised hands froze in midair.

Seeing the goat-faced Demon's movements slow down as if struggling against something, Lumian ignited with white flames, transforming into a spear and darting past the high-ranking undead to where the Sword of Courage had fallen.

Perhaps because the goat-faced Demon wasn't an undead created by the Death pathway, its intimidating effect on Lumian was weak. It lacked the ability to enslave his body and mind, allowing Lumian to muster the courage to fight back.

While retrieving the iron-black broadsword, Lumian released the spirituality he had accumulated using his Ascetic ability.

At the same time, his eyes turned iron-black, reflecting the many colors on the goat-faced Demon.

He quickly found a patch of pallor, took two steps towards the goat-faced Demon, and leaped high.

In midair, Lumian adjusted his posture, gripping the Sword of Courage with both hands and descending towards the slow-moving Demon, still battling Sharron.

This time, he used the Sword of Courage's Cull ability!

His spirituality surged into the iron-black broadsword, causing the bright white and blue flames to flare up and then condense inward.

With a heavy thud, Lumian landed on the Demon's back, stabbing the Sword of Courage into the junction of its neck and body. The blade sliced into the decayed flesh like butter.

As pus splattered, the flames on the broadsword poured into the goat-faced Demon's body.

Boom! A muffled explosion echoed, and Sharron quickly withdrew from the Demon's body.
The Demon disintegrated into a puddle of sticky black liquid, condensed from evil thoughts.
The liquid, scattered by the expanding flames and shockwaves, swiftly flowed into the dark hole leading to the Pale-white Nation, seemingly to reassemble itself.
Holding the Sword of Courage, Lumian felt his released spirituality deplete by two-thirds. He wanted to chase and fight the Demon again but felt his body stiffen and his soul trapped in an invisible cage.
"Retrieve your target item first," the faint voice of the Knight of Swords echoed in his ears.
Right... Lumian agreed with the Knight of Swords' reasoning.
I don't fear the goat-faced Demon. I can totally grab the Abscessed Hand's body before it reassembles!
He transformed into a burning-white spear, darting to the bone torches. To better move the Abscessed Hand's body, he temporarily stashed the Sword of Courage in the Traveler's Bag.
Moments later, Lumian felt a pang of fear: I only have a third of my spirituality left, yet I was thinking of a life-or-death fight with the Demon?
And Sharron is clearly in poor condition!
Now isn't the time for that. Shouldn't I grab the target item and leave the collapsing cathedral before the Demon reassembles?
Thankfully, the Knight of Swords acted as a valve for my courage and found a convincing reason!
Without hesitation, Lumian grasped the Abscessed Hand's half-body, trying to lift it.
It was extremely heavy, like metal. Fortunately, Lumian was now a Sequence 5 Beyonder, from a pathway known for their strength.
During this process, Lumian worried the body might suddenly reanimate and deliver a fatal blow. However, the Abscessed Hand's half-body, after enduring years of cutting by the goat-faced Demon, seemed lifeless with no abnormal reaction.
Lumian placed the half-corpse into the Traveler's Bag, relieved to see it "sink" inside.
Living flesh couldn't be stored in the Traveler's Bag, and the Abscessed Hand's body had shown self-healing traits earlier. Lumian had thought if he couldn't store it, he'd carry it or have the Knight of Swords or Sharron possess it to make it move.
With the body stored, Lumian heard creaking sounds from the dark hole.
He immediately transformed into a blazing spear, darting out of

the half-collapsed pitch-black cathedral.
With a swoosh, the white flames left a burning trail in the dark, spreading quickly into the distance.
Without the Pale-White Nation's erosion, Lumian flew far in one breath.
Under the golden humanoid lamplights, he repeatedly transformed into a blazing spear, finally reaching the shadowy River Styx.
He saw the gloomy, tattered boat reappear, slowly approaching as the boatman rowed.
Lumian waited anxiously, not daring to fly onto the boat as a spear.
According to the Knight of Swords Maric, doing so would make him sink into the river's depths, never to be saved.
Behind him, pale green flames burned quietly, sometimes swaying with the ground's tremors, sometimes shaking with some vibrations.
Lumian tensed, feeling an increasing danger, unsure if it was from the ancient Death's corpse awakening or the goat-faced Demon's pursuit.
He looked at the slow-moving boat, using a Hunter's method to calm his emotions.
He chuckled and spoke to the Knight of Swords Maric within him, "I thought the goat-faced Demon was powerful, just below the ancient gods, holding a grudge against the Devil Monarch and desiring the egg beneath the ancient Death's corpse. But now, it seems it's just at the Saint level, with only a corpse left, lacking Beyonder characteristics."
The Knight of Swords didn't respond.
Lumian continued, "The goat-faced Demon's initial request to kill the Devil Monarch was likely a bluff, making us more likely to accept the second condition, thinking it reasonable. If Oxyto's premature child hadn't interfered, we might have stolen the egg, only to face the ancient Death's wrath, unrelated to the goat-faced Demon.
"It also used the request to kill the Devil Monarch to build its image, making us think it was formidable, of high rank, preventing us from attacking it or abandoning the egg task.
"What a cunning Demon..."
Lumian then remembered the demon's accusation: "You've taken that egg for yourself!"
When did I take the egg? It's still under the Phoenix Ancestor's corpse. I only resonated with the creature inside, hearing and seeing what it did... Did the Demon mistake this resonance for me

taking and breaking the egg? As an undead, even if it was a Saint-level Demon in life, it might have little brain left, acting on its cunning Demonic instinct... As Lumian pondered, the tattered boat finally reached the shore.
He jumped aboard, standing behind the boatman.
Though the boatman might attack later, compared to the goat-faced Demon's pursuit and the ancient Death's corpse's awakening, it was "friendly."
This was manageable.
The rickety boat shook as it left the dark shore, slowly heading towards the middle of the shadowy river.
Lumian looked back at the depths of the Underworld, seeing the intense darkness calm down, no more tremors or heavy sounds.
Everything was serene again.
Lumian relaxed a bit, instinctively sighing.
This Underworld trip was indeed "intense"...
Only now did he ponder the huge black egg issue: The creature inside seemed related to Omebella!
From this, Lumian felt the Great Mother naming Her Child of God after the ancient god, Omebella, wasn't just for symbolic reasons to erode the Earth Mother's authority. The fallen Goddess of Harvest held significant secrets.
But Omebella wasn't one of the eight ancient gods ruling the sky and land, just the Giant King's queen, akin to an Angel. *How can Her secrets affect the current era?*
Ah, many key pieces of information are obscured by history's fog. Only a few high-ranking beings from the Second Epoch know a bit...
Lumian mused as he watched the dark land of the Underworld recede, until only the shadowy River Styx water filled his view.
He suddenly felt the matter had finally come to an end.

Chapter 776: Secrets

This time, the boatman didn't attack Lumian. Instead, he rowed the gloomy boat to the opposite shore.

Jumping onto the wasteland covered in withered blood flowers, Lumian, whose spirituality was nearly exhausted, ran towards the pile of bones and corpses on higher ground.

After running for a few minutes, he saw faint starlight piercing through the dim sky.

Next, the void tore open like transparent paper.

The tear blended with the starlight, forming a door of shimmering light.

Standing beyond the door was Madam Magician, dressed in a loose orange dress.

Madam Magician did not enter the Underworld but floated in the void outside the door, smiling at Lumian and the others.

Madam Magician... Lumian had expected another demigod from the temperance faction, bringing a Beyonder of the Death pathway to open the door to the Underworld to fetch him, Sharron, and Maric. But it was the Major Arcana card holder, Madam Magician.

She can find the Underworld?

She can tear through its barrier and create a door?

Suppressing his curiosity, Lumian took a running start and jumped through the starlit door.

He felt a wave of dizziness and his vision darkened before he saw the clear, pure Lake Dalsh and felt the thin air of the highlands.

He reflexively removed the golden mask of the Eggers family from his face to avoid becoming a true undead from wearing it too long.

During this, the figures of Sharron and the Knight of Swords Maric appeared beside him.

"Thank you," the Knight of Swords politely addressed Madam Magician.

Wearing a small black and Gothic dress, Sharron nodded silently.

"It's only right," Madam Magician replied with a smile. "It's a pity we couldn't catch Oxyto. The Great Mother's Bestowed are very vigilant and skilled at rebirth, making them extremely hard to catch."

After a few pleasantries, the Knight of Swords said goodbye.

Before leaving, he and Sharron both nodded to Lumian, showing their approval.

Although the Knight of Swords' request was only to help find Oxyto, Lumian had far exceeded that by chasing Oxyto's premature child into the Underworld and eliminating it. In return, Sharron, despite being injured, helped Lumian control the goat-faced

Demon, giving him a chance to defeat it and take the Abscessed Hand's half-body. Thus, neither owed the other, and no additional payment was necessary.
Of course, establishing a friendship and deepening his connection with the Knight of Swords was an added bonus.
After Sharron and the Knight of Swords left, Madam Magician looked at Lumian with a teasing smile.
"Wondering how I found the Underworld?
"For a high-ranking member of the Apprentice pathway, the Underworld is just there. There's no question of finding it. Even if hidden, we can easily locate it by observing the Gatekeepers and master the ability to summon a door to the Underworld. But I didn't summon it; I just opened a door."
"Then why did you say I had to wait for an opportunity to enter the Underworld?" Lumian asked reflexively.
As Mr. Fool's Angel of Stars, couldn't you just open a door to the Underworld for me?
What opportunity was there to wait for?
Madam Magician chuckled.
"Could you have retrieved part of the Abscessed Hand's body if I had sent you to the Underworld back then?"
"No..." Lumian answered softly.
Not only would he fail, but he might also die instantly from illegal teleportation.
This time, with guidance from the temperance faction and the help of a demigod, he had a chance to take the Abscessed Hand's body from the goat-faced Demon.
Of course, the risks had also increased significantly.
"I sensed an opportunity and advised you to wait," Madam Magician said sincerely. "Not all abilities can be repeated; not using them and using them to change one's state directly is very difficult."
Lumian didn't dwell on it, recounting his experiences in the Underworld with Sharron and the Knight of Swords.
Madam Magician listened attentively without interrupting, sometimes showing a thoughtful expression.
"What secrets are hidden in the body of the Second Epoch's Goddess of Harvest?" Lumian asked at the end.
Madam Magician replied, shaking her head, "I don't know."
She paused for a moment before adding, "There are things I hadn't planned to tell you so early because it's not good for you. But since you've merged with Omebella's bloodline and experienced the Underworld, I can share a bit. Do you remember the relic of Omebella I mentioned?"

"Yes," Lumian said, one of his reasons for merging with Omebella's bloodline being the hope of briefly using the Grade 0 Sealed Artifact formed from the relic.
Madam Magician continued, "Do you know where it is?"
Before Lumian could shake his head, she answered herself, "It's in the New City of Silver."
New City of Silver? The Church of The Fool's headquarters? Lumian thought of the giant-like beings that made him feel like a dwarf.
Omebella's relic is a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact of the Church of The Fool's in New City of Silver?
Madam Magician pondered for a few seconds before saying, "First, you need to understand a piece of mystical knowledge. Marauders, the Angels of the Error pathway, can steal others' identities and destinies.
In other words, someone whose identity and destiny are stolen will no longer be recognized by their parents, spouse, or children, gradually becoming rejected by fate."
Lumian recalled the Substitution Spell in the Inevitability domain, which also involved one's identity and fate.
Though different from Madam Magician's description and on a much lower level, it helped Lumian understand her words.
Seeing he had no questions, Madam Magician continued, "According to what we know, I suspect the Goddess of Harvest Omebella had Her identity and destiny stolen by a high-ranking member of the Error pathway and was killed by Her direct relatives.
"Up to this point, it sounds like nothing more than a horrific consOriginal, but think about it. Why would the body of the Goddess of Harvest, killed by Her direct relatives and robbed of Her identity and destiny, end up in the former City of Silver, not silently in a battlefield corner?
"And more strangely, the ancestors of the City of Silver knew it was Omebella's body and Her true identity. At the time, the Steal effect was still present!"
Lumian sensed something amiss and frowned, "What's the City of Silver's records or speculations on this? Does Omebella's body contain Beyonder characteristics?"
"None," Madam Magician answered firmly. "The City of Silver's records are sparse due to the Ancient Sun God's rule in the Third Epoch. But their ancestors mentioned that the Goddess of Harvest walked to the City of Silver on Her own. Heh heh. Strange, right? You'll understand more when you can temporarily use that Grade 0 Sealed Artifact. Now is not the time."
This confirms that Omebella held significant mysteries... Lumian

asked cautiously, "What did the goat-faced Demon mean when it said I had taken the egg for myself?"
Madam Magician gazed at Lumian for a moment before saying, "There's no change in your body, but I temporarily can't confirm whether it's the same for the egg. It'll need some observation."
Lumian tersely acknowledged her words and pointed to the clear, serene Lake Dalsh. "What's special about this lake? How is it related to the Underworld?"
Madam Magician laughed.
"The temperance faction had a King of Angels and Angels ruling here for a thousand years, but they couldn't uncover the lake's secrets. Why would I find out in a short time?
"Even the direct descendants of the Eggers family don't know why Lake Dalsh is special.
"From your Underworld trip, it seems the lake's uniqueness predates the Eggers' ancestor becoming Death."
"Related to the ancient Death, Phoenix Ancestor Gregrace?" Lumian inferred from Madam Magician's words.
Thinking of the huge black egg beneath the ancient Death's corpse, he found this explanation plausible for why Oxyto wanted the bird-clawed creature to be born with Lake Dalsh's help.
"Perhaps," Madam Magician replied uncertainly.
Lumian was silent for a few seconds before changing the topic.
"Madam Magician, now that we have part of the Abscessed Hand's body, I want to go to Lenburg soon to find the City of Exiles, Morora."
"You're feeling a sense of urgency, rather impatient as well," Madam Magician remarked. "Relax for a few days, calm your mind, then go.
We'll follow up on the vortex matter. Your companions will investigate the Mirror People. You probably can't take your companions into the City of Exiles. Also, focus on learning languages. After dealing with the City of Exiles, prepare your team for the advancement."
"Alright," Lumian agreed, feeling he needed to adjust his state.
...
Trier, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai.
Lumian reunited with Franca, Jenna, and Anthony.
After recounting his experiences in the Underworld, Franca said with genuine emotion, "So that's what the Underworld is like. The River Styx really exists..."
Then she frowned immediately.
"You've fully digested your Reaper potion, but I'm still a bit short on

my Pleasure..."
In this digestion, Lumian credited eighty percent to Madame Sharron, ten percent to the Knight of Swords, and only ten percent to himself.
Without pride and after some thought, he said to Franca, "Maybe I can help you quickly digest Pleasure."
"Huh..." Franca raised an eyebrow while Jenna looked puzzled.
Lumian smiled and explained, "I've accumulated fate fragments from Moran Avigny's lust outburst. If we find a powerful Beyonder to take this fate, wouldn't it allow you to digest Pleasure significantly?
"Hmm, Pirate Admirals out at sea would be perfect for this."

Chapter 777: Traitor

Franca was dumbfounded. "Is that even possible?"

This can be recycled?

It's not like it's water!

I've already digested a lot of my Pleasure potion because of Moran Avigny...

"Why not?" Lumian said with a smile. "It's like wanting a powerful target to experience pleasure but needing my help to get close enough.

Pleasure doesn't have to be one-on-one, otherwise Browns Sauron's female orgies wouldn't make sense. What we're doing is like dealing with Moran Avigny while also affecting another target."

"This... but..." Franca had to admit that Lumian had a point, and it was possible, but it felt like exploiting a loophole, like using a bug ina game.

At the same time, Franca complained to herself about Lumian, Have you been reading too many illegal books or watching too many orgies?

How can you talk about one-to-many so naturally... Also, borrowing your help for other things is fine, but when it comes to pleasure, this description is just too strange...

Under the watchful eyes of Anthony and the still somewhat puzzled Jenna, Lumian turned to Franca and asked, "Let's imagine a scenario:

You're experiencing pleasure with someone, and another person passes by and sees the scene, getting strongly aroused and experiencing pleasure themselves. Would that help you digest your Pleasure potion?"

"Yes," Franca answered with some certainty.

Based on her experience, pleasure didn't have to involve direct contact or a fixed method. As long as it met the basic condition of the target experiencing pleasure because of her, it worked. It was even better if it left the target deeply immersed and unable to extricate themselves.

Realizing this, Franca suddenly paused.

If this were my world before I transmigrated over, as long as one could abandon decency, shame, and morality, digesting the Pleasure potion would be incredibly easy. After the preparations, it might only take a few days or even hours to fully digest it.

Lumian responded with a smile, "What's the fundamental difference between the scenario I described and transferring Moran Avigny's fate fragment to a Pirate Admiral, causing a lust outburst?"

"None..." Franca was convinced.
She then sighed and said, "You're really good at exploiting bugs."
"What's a bug here?" Jenna asked, confused.
Lumian, having heard this strange word from his sister Aurore, helped explain, "Exploiting a bug means taking advantage of a loophole."
Franca clicked her tongue and nodded.
"You know, sometimes I think you'd be better suited for the Error pathway."
"Then I'd probably become an Amon by now," Lumian replied with self-awareness, laughing.
Franca, being an individual of action—otherwise, she wouldn't have drunk the Witch potion—immediately asked, "Which Pirate Admiral should we target?
"Isn't it too dangerous? Each Pirate Admiral has their own fleet with many Beyonders and backing from powerful forces."
"We're just giving him pleasure, not doing anything else. What's there to worry about?" Lumian replied casually. "Even if we can't hold back and kill him, so what? We've already offended plenty of powerful forces.
These Pirate Admirals aren't exactly law-abiding citizens."
Seeing Franca still wanting to say something, Lumian added, "This will also be a good test for our team. Trust me, the few of us together are as good as any Pirate Admiral's crew. Plus, we can find opportunities for Jenna to digest her Witch potion and for Anthony to digest his Hypnotist potion."
"Alright." Franca nodded. "Let's gather intelligence on the Pirate Admirals and see who we can locate."
First, they needed to find someone!
Having settled that, Franca once again commented on Lumian's Underworld trip, "That ended so quickly. I couldn't contact 007 last night to give him Jenna's messenger summoning method. I thought I'd return to Trier tonight to complete this task. Who knew the whole mission would end so soon? We don't need to go to the Southern Continent or give 007 the summoning method."
She had expected the mission to last several days, maybe a week or two, but it was done in one morning.
In Saint Vièvе Cathedral.
Angoulême, wearing a brown wool coat, stood at the door of the room, gazing up the stairs leading to the higher floor.
Yesterday, he and several colleagues were ordered to stay on night duty without being given a reason.
Angoulême could vaguely guess the reason, as he had provided the relevant information to the higher-ups.

As time slowly passed, a middle-aged man in a white robe with golden threads came up the grand staircase.
The man had black hair and brown eyes, an authoritative presence, and neatly trimmed mustache.
Angoulême recognized him. They had interacted a few times while handling some occult cases in the Trier region.
This was Peacock, Senior Deacon of the Purifiers and one of the heads of the Inquisition.
He wasn't Angoulême's direct superior, as he was in charge of the surrounding areas of Trier, essentially the entire Trier district except for Trier itself.
He was not a demigod of the Sun pathway but a Sequence 4 of the Lawyer pathway, a Earl of The Fallen.
Seeing Peacock, Angoulême averted his gaze and retreated further into the room.
He suspected that Peacock was a core member of April Fool's outside the Curly-Haired Baboon Research Society, who had orchestrated the release of the humanoid Sealed Artifact 1-147 from church control.
Angoulême's reasoning was simple: The April Fool's core member within the church had used a Broker's Under the Table transaction to get other Purifiers to release 1-147 for various purposes. The Lawyer pathway was similar to the Broker pathway, adept at twisting terms in deals and agreements to achieve their goals.
This pathway's demigods had been involved in numerous shady transactions, making them most likely to come into contact with or be contacted by a Broker.
Before Overseer Perle was discovered, Peacock wasn't on the Eternal Blazing Sun Church's investigation list because 1-147 wasn't in his jurisdiction, and he hadn't left his Inquisition during that time. Despite knowing the location and information of most Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts as a Senior Deacon, he wasn't suspected.
Today, Peacock was at Saint Vièvе Cathedral for a meeting.
The official reason was to discuss disrupting the Mirror People's plans and eliminating these hidden rats. The demigods of the Trier district needed to meet face-to-face to finalize their strategy.
After Peacock's figure in the white robe with golden threads disappeared up the stairs, Angoulême slowly exhaled and became more vigilant about what might happen.
A minute or two later, Angoulême felt the whole cathedral gently tremble.
This lasted only a few seconds before stopping. Few noticed except those already on alert for such occurrences.
In a sunlit room near the dome.

Cardinal of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church and Archbishop of Trier, Plessy, with high cheekbones and blond hair turning white, stood beside a woman in a white robe, beautiful yet sacred.
She was Saint Viève, Trier's guardian angel!
Opposite them, near the door, Peacock's body twisted, mostly melted, revealing an interior seemingly filled with white wax.
The Senior Deacon of the Purifiers laughed heartily. "The Overseer informed me immediately that she was compromised. I've been using this wax figure to act for days!"
His real body hid in the shadows, observing without interacting with anyone from the Eternal Blazing Sun Church.
"Just as expected..." Trier Archbishop Plessy sighed.
This had been anticipated. The Overseer's escape made this development inevitable.
Though the church had kept the Overseer's escape secret, they hadn't held much hope.
The wax figure of the Earl of The Fallen Peacock quickly melted. Looking at Saint Viève's impassive face, his voice turned sharp as he laughed again.
"I made the only right choice.
"The Crimson will come. Only by submitting to the great existences can we Survive the apocalypse!
"The Crimson will come!"
After shouting, Peacock's wax figure completely melted into a half-solidified, half-liquid mess.
Saint Viève, dressed in a white robe with golden threads and no other ornaments, watched silently before speaking a few seconds later, "Who made this wax figure for him?"
"Probably acquired through a Broker," Trier Archbishop Plessy replied gravely.
Saint Viève, Her tone unchanged, said, "Few Beyonders can make such a wax figure."
"Yes, that's a lead to follow." Plessy nodded.
A wax figure that could initially fool an Angel's senses wasn't simple.
Finding its maker might lead to uncovering the Broker and the hidden Overseer.
Saint Viève continued, "Inform all bishops, padres, and Purifiers about Peacock's fall, but don't issue a wanted notice."
"Yes." Plessy agreed that a wanted notice for a demigod would be useless and might damage the Church's image among the public.
A few days later, Franca, Anthony, and the others used different channels to gather the latest sightings and rumored whereabouts of the Pirate Admirals.

Looking at the information, Franca patted the top sheet and said to Lumian, "How about this one?"
Lumian glanced at the name and read it silently: Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine.

Chapter 778: Method of Arrival

Lumian had already looked through the information Franca had gathered and could guess her reasoning for this choice: Howl Constantine-Admiral Deep Sea-with rumored sea monster blood, often went to an island called "Banamo" west of the Fog Sea for supplies. A few days ago, someone spotted Howl Constantine's flagship, the Newins, surfacing on a route to Banamo, allowing the crew to breathe fresh air and enjoy their precious freedom.

Based on the distance, speed, route conditions, and weather in the Fog Sea, it was estimated that the Newins would reach Banamo in about two to three days.

Among all the Pirate Admirals, he was the only one with a predictable trajectory in the near future!

"We can give it a try," Lumian responded nonchalantly to Franca's suggestion.

Having participated in battles at the demigod level and played a significant role, he felt that which Pirate Admiral they targeted didn't matter much as long as they could locate him.

Franca glanced at Lumian and mumbled, "I think there's something wrong with your attitude. You can't underestimate the best of the Sequence 5s. You're not a demigod yet, and your body is still fragile.

Underestimating Admiral Deep Sea could cost you dearly. There's a saying from my homeland: Strategically, you can underestimate your enemy, but tactically, you must respect them."

"I know. Aurore used to remind me of that, telling me not to underestimate the villagers' intelligence and think my pranks would always succeed without problems. After being chased by them a few times, I understood it well." Lumian said earnestly, "Your homeland also has another saying: Weakness and ignorance aren't barriers to survival, but arrogance is."

"Stop!" Franca grumbled. "As long as you know it; don't turn this into an exchange of famous sayings."

Seeing they had decided on the target, Jenna spoke up, "The problem now is, how do we get to Banamo Island?"

Banamo, located in the northwest of the Fog Sea, was once a Feysac Empire colony. Later, as the Feysac Empire declined and the natives of Banamo resisted actively, the island gained independence.

It helped that Banamo lacked valuable resources and was only a base for exploring the Fog Sea's end. Giving it up wasn't a big loss.

After gaining independence, Banamo developed into a pirate haven, offering a place for pirates to trade and resupply.

Jenna's point was clear: Even with clear routes and good weather, it would take two to three weeks to sail from Trier to Banamo. Any issues requiring detours or delays could stretch the journey to a month. By then, Admiral Deep Sea would likely have left Banamo, and finding a Pirate Admiral on the open sea would be almost impossible without a stroke of fate.
Given the circumstances, only teleportation could ensure the team reached Banamo in time to wait for Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine. However, neither Lumian nor Franca had the spirit world coordinates for Banamo Island, making long-distance teleportation impossible without getting lost in the spirit world.
Lumian thought for a moment and asked Franca, "Can we contact anyone on Banamo Island?"
"We should be able to. There's a telegraph office on Banamo Island," Franca answered thoughtfully. "We can ask adventurers who've been to Banamo to send a telegram to their friends on the island."
Lumian chuckled. "Good. If everything goes well, we can arrive at Banamo Island tonight."
...
Banamo Island in the Fog Sea, shrouded in perennial fog and gloomy weather.
In the island's only port, Mason, carrying a bundle of items, navigated through the bustling pirates and entered an abandoned warehouse.
The warehouse had been destroyed in a pirate skirmish and never repaired, becoming a desolate spot.
Mason was an adventurer who despised the brutal and ruthless pirates but couldn't leave Banamo because the pirate haven was full of opportunities.
Even if he didn't hunt down solitary, bounty-carrying pirates, he could wait for pirate feuds to end and take the remaining goods from the losers.
This was how he became a Beyonder, now a Sequence 8 Pugilist.
(Amonoculus' note: From the Twilight Giant Pathway)
Today, Mason took on a task supposedly very simple but with a reward of 1,000 verl d'or, seeking a secluded place to complete it.
He quickly cleared the pile of broken wooden crates, stacking them to form an altar.
Following the task description, he placed candles, incense, and essential oils on the altar.
After the preparations, Mason took out the neatly folded task description and read the next steps, "The most challenging part of this task is the necessary knowledge, including basic ancient Hermes and proficient Hermes. If you don't meet these conditions,

don't take the commission..."
Fortunately, I learned some ancient Hermes and enough Hermes from other adventurers... Mason felt lucky for his past decision when taking this task.
It wasn't that he was more studious than other adventurers, but the items he had previously acquired involved Hermes. To understand their true value, he had paid an adventurer proficient in Hermes to teach him for a while.
After quickly reading the second half of the task description, Mason assessed the potential dangers and felt confident it wouldn't be a big problem.
He then arduously created a wall of spirituality, lit the candles, dripped the incense, and took two steps back, chanting in ancient Hermes, "I!"
This was one of the few words he knew in ancient Hermes.
He then switched to Hermes:
"I summon in my name:
"A creature wandering above the world, the penitent who awakens from the flames of pain, a messenger that belongs solely to Lumian Lee..."
As Mason finished, the candle flames surged, turning a deep green, almost black.
In the firelight, a tall figure in a black clergyman's robe emerged.
Mason took a step back in fear at the sight.
The figure's exposed parts seemed long scorched by flames, with blackened flesh and skin clinging to the bones. Its eye sockets were dark, burning with deep-colored flames, and its body was oozing a viscous black fluid like water.
It looked like an undead creature!
Mason had seen similar beings in Banamo Port, as some pirates were adept at communicating with corpses. However, the summoned Penitent made Mason instinctively fearful, sensing it was fundamentally different from ordinary undead.
Even the Pirate Admirals who had visited Banamo Port hadn't given Mason this feeling!
Seeing the dried corpse in a black clergyman's robe looking at him, Mason shakily handed over the letter.
His task was to deliver a letter to someone named Lumian Lee!
The blackened, burning corpse messenger took the letter and disappeared into the dark-green candlelight.
The abandoned warehouse returned to normal.
Mason wiped his cold sweat and muttered to himself, "This seems more complicated than I thought... I've heard of people being lured into special rituals, summoning evil gods or devils, destroying

themselves and their towns... Was that what just happened? *Is a catastrophe coming to Banamo Port? Is Lumian Lee the true name of an evil god or demon?*"
won Mason had previously seen that the ritual only summoned a messenger, unrelated to evil gods or demons. As a Sequence 8 Beyonder, he had taken the risk, but the messenger made him uneasy.
Muttering to himself, Mason cleaned up the items on the altar.
Suddenly, he stopped and frowned.
"I think I've heard the name Lumian Lee somewhere before..."
He tried to recall but couldn't remember.
Before leaving the abandoned warehouse, Mason glanced back at the makeshift altar, seeing shadows shifting within the broken crates.
His heart tightened. Pretending he hadn't seen anything, Mason quickly left the warehouse.
In Trier, within Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, in the apartment rented by Franca and Jenna.
Lumian saw Penitent Baynfel step out of the void and hand hima letter.
He didn't even open it, knowing it contained only blank paper.
He asked his messenger, "Can you deliver a reply to the sender?"
"I can," Penitent Baynfel answered in a low voice.
Lumian smiled and pointed to himself.
"Lam the reply."
In the foggy Banamo Port, Lumian leaned against the outer wall of the abandoned warehouse, watching the sender walk out with a fearful expression and quickly leave.
He smiled, took a golden straw hat from the Traveler's Backpack, looked at it for a moment, and put it back.
Having the famous adventurer Louis Berry appear here would arouse unnecessary suspicion and might cause Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine to change his destination and avoid Banamo Port.
Lumian straightened up, tightened his thick jacket, and walked slowly along the streets of Banamo Port, his hands in his pockets.
He planned to take a look around before returning to fetch Franca and the others.
Trier, late at night.
AngoulÃªme arrived at the agreed-upon empty house to retrieve emergency contact information from Hidden Blade.
He quickly found the note and read its contents: "In case of emergency, summon my friend's messenger: "Rabbit-shaped spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a runner who pursues

knowledge, a messenger that belongs solely to the Seven of Cups."
Seven of Cups... From the Tarot Club? Hidden Blade, your friend is you, right? AngoulÃªme muttered to himself.
He felt he understood why Hidden Blade always had so many troublesome matters.

Chapter 779: Pirate Haven

Banamo Port.

As Lumian strolled along the streets, he couldn't shake the feeling that he had arrived in Backlund, the capital of the Loen Kingdom. Although he had never been there, the foggy sky and damp, cold environment mirrored Trier's newspapers and magazines' mockery of Backlund.

Of course, the architectural style here was distinctly different from Backlund's. There were two main types: one was large yet not crude, with typical Feysac characteristics, and the other was a mix of stone and wood, simple and rough, often crowded together without any clear planning.

Most of the people on the streets were dressed like typical pirates, with short knives strapped to their waists and guns tucked into their belts, not bothering to conceal their weapons. In contrast, the locals with dark-brown skin always wore smiles, their faces full of deference.

Lumian fully understood the mindset of the natives. After all, angering a pirate could result in being dragged into a corner and killed, or having someone sneak into their home at night to murder them. The killer would then sail away on their pirate ship without a care.

The current rulers of Banamo Island were trying to recruit pirates and adventurers to maintain order and hoped the great pirates would agree on a pirate code to regulate behavior in the port. However, these measures had limited effectiveness.

This was because seasoned pirates couldn't suddenly start obeying laws and strict rules, even if they became sheriffs or police officers.

Moreover, there wasn't a strong enough force on the island to keep them in check. As a result, it was common for sheriffs to break the law and accept bribes to shield criminals.

The pirate code, agreed upon by the great pirates, wasn't mandatory.

Even if someone broke it, they would only face minor punishment within their own crew. No one would hand over their own men to be dealt with by others.

These measures' greatest effect was making Banamo Port appear somewhat orderly. As Lumian admired the bustling street scenes, he occasionally heard screams or gunshots from the alleys.

This place is perfect for a Hunter, he thought, genuinely appreciating it.

When two groups of pirates started a brawl in the middle of the

street, Lumian had a sudden idea: A Iarge-scale plague for a Demoness of Despair advancement ritual could work here...
But I would need to develop medicine to prevent infection or severe illness and secretly distribute it to the locals...
The only problem is that there aren't 30,000 pirates here. However, there are quite a few Beyonders among them. Infecting them and causing them suffering and despair should significantly reduce the number needed for the ritual...
As Lumian watched the pirate brawl with interest, he pondered the feasibility of holding the Demoness of Despair ritual in Banamo Port.
When the fight was almost over, the sheriffs finally arrived, dispersing the two groups and symbolically arresting a few people.
They were just waiting for the respective pirate crews to pay the fines!
As for the grievances between the two groups, the sheriffs didn't care. If they wanted revenge, they would have to settle it out at sea.
Meanwhile, adventurers and locals quietly dragged away some of the pirate corpses left on the street.
Lumian felt like applauding this kind of order.
Taking advantage of the remaining daylight and the sun filtering through the fog, he continued his leisurely stroll through Banamo Port.
Passing a stone house with a small square, he saw a dozen or so people gathered, mostly locals. A pirate wearing a bicorne hat and blue woolen clothes stood on a stone platform in front of them.
The pirate was shouting in Feysac, "You're just a bunch of pups fresh from your mother's embrace. If you want to become proper pirates, you need training. Today, I'll give you your first lesson: who you can and can't mess with at sea..."
Feysac was the language with the least difference from ancient Feysac.
Lumian, skilled in ancient Feysac, barely understood what the pirate was Saying. He realized that the pirate crew was recruiting newcomers and providing basic training.
Why does this feel like a big company in Trier hiring new employees...
Lumian grumbled to himself as he watched the pirate display wanted posters and portraits, introducing the six kings, nine admirals, and notable adventurers.
This was exactly the information Lumian needed. He stopped and listened from a distance.
As expected, he saw a portrait and detailed introduction of Louis Berry.

At the end, the pirate with the bicorne hat pointed to a portrait and said, "His bounty isn't high, but you must never underestimate him, or even have any contact with him."
No contact at all? Lumian focused on the portrait, seeing a burly man in his thirties with thick brown body hair, wearing suspenders and a white shirt.
The pirate's tone became serious as he introduced the man to the new pirates, "His name is Frank Lee, the first mate of the Queen of Stars. He's a Druid.
"What is a Druid? I'll explain when we cover Beyonder knowledge. For now, just know that a Druid is Sequence 5, on par with the Pirate Admirals. So, understand how terrifying Frank Lee is?
"But that's not the main reason adventurers and pirates fear him. I don't know the exact reason either. I only know that every pirate and adventurer who's encountered Frank Lee acts like they've gone mad. They jump out of their chairs and sometimes vomit when his name is mentioned. They always warn me to stay away from Frank Lee and not to leave any blood near him or eat anything found around him..."
So, the legendary Druid Frank Lee is the first mate of the Pirate King...
But why are so many pirates and adventurers so terrified of him? Even if he has the strength of a Pirate Admiral and is ruthless, it shouldn't cause this reaction... Lumian silently mused as he listened to the pirate's introduction.
He was curious about what made Frank Lee so special.
After watching the pirate crew's recruitment, Lumian headed to the nearby Carnival Bar.
He pushed through the unapologetically pirate crowd and sat on a high stool at the bar, ordering a Lanti Proof.
The common language in Banamo Port was Feysac, but pirates spoke various languages, and few were multilingual. Those who spoke Feysac formed one circle, those who spoke Intisian another, and so on. Lumian chose the Carnival Bar because all its signage was in Intisian.
In the noisy, lively environment, Lumian took two sips of his drink, put down his glass, and asked the bartender loudly in Intisian, "Do you have detailed information on the nine Pirate Admirals? Something beyond the wanted posters."
Suddenly, the entire bar went silent. Every pirate turned to look at Lumian at the bar.
It became so quiet that the sound of someone swallowing could be heard.
The bartender's expression turned awkward and amused. He asked

Lumian, "Are you an adventurer?"
An adventurer coming to a pirate bar to ask for detailed information on the Pirate Admirals!
Lumian didn't answer the bartender. He half-turned to look at the staring pirates.
Around him, one by one, crimson-white fireballs began to form and float in the air.
Lumian smiled, raising his chin slightly. "Even though your bounties are low and I don't want to bother, if anyone wants to give me money voluntarily, I won't mind accepting it."
The pirates' expressions changed, but Lumian's gaze remained steady.
He scanned their faces and sneered. "Anyone want to try?"
Silence. The entire Carnival Bar remained silent.
Everyone could feel the danger in those crimson-white fireballs.
Lumian stopped provoking them, pointing to a chair a few meters behind him.
"Don't appear behind me. Don't think about using the crowd to get close and assassinate me.
"If anyone crosses that chair, I'll kill them."
After speaking, Lumian turned back, smiling at the bartender amid the fireballs.
"Now, you can answer my question."
Seeing this adventurer not introduce himself or boast about his exploits, but show absolute confidence and a nonchalant attitude toward killing, the bartender forced a smile.
"We know about the same as the wanted posters. If you want more hidden details, ask the enemies of the Pirate Admirals. Emperor Roselle once said the person who knows you best is your enemy."
"Tell me about each Pirate Admiral's enemies," Lumian said, taking another sip of his Lanti Proof.
In the bar, the pirates resumed their conversations, while some quietly left, seemingly to find help upon seeing the adventurer easily maintain the fireballs.
Lumian didn't stop them or even look their way.
When the bartender finished, Lumian had a general understanding of who Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine's enemies were. This Pirate Admiral with sea monster blood was usually low-key and mysterious.
Besides doing pirate work in a bloody and brutal manner, he rarely clashed with other Pirate Admirals or major forces. However, the former Vice Admiral Dusk, now the King of Dusk, Bulatov Ivan, suspected Howl Constantine's two "submarine ships" came from a legendary sea treasure, the Lost Newins. He targeted Admiral Deep

Sea, seeking information on the Newins, leading to multiple conflicts.
When Bulatov became a king over the seas, Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine had no choice but to avoid this powerhouse and his fleet.

Chapter 780: Primary Job

Lumian listened to the bartender recount the rivalries and grudges of the Pirate Admirals while the pirates behind him grew increasingly restless.

They were all hoping someone would make the first move, either by shooting or stabbing the arrogant adventurer, so they could all rush him at once.

But the threat of those crimson-white fireballs deterred them. They looked at each other, but no one dared cross the chair Lumian had designated.

They figured anyone this brazen had to be pretty strong, and the Carnival Bar was low-tier, with no high-profile pirates around. They could only hope those who had left would return with someone more formidable.

After about ten minutes, one of the pirates who had left pushed open the heavy wooden door.

Behind him was a middle-aged man wearing a tricorne hat and dressed in dark blue.

The pirates in the bar immediately straightened up, holding their breath. The noisy, lively atmosphere quickly returned to silence.

Some of them recognized the man, knowing him as Captain Flying Hadmagk of the Rosemary, a well-known pirate just below the Pirate Admirals, active on the Five Seas for over a decade.

The pirate who opened the door flashed a flattering smile and pointed at Lumian's back. "Captain, that's the adventurer I mentioned! He dared to provoke all the pirates in Banamo Port!"

Hadmagk, with his thick, dark hair and imposing presence, stared at Lumian's back for a few seconds. He paused before asking, "How long has he been maintaining those fireballs?"

"I don't know. They were there when I left the bar, but he might not have kept them up the whole time," the pirate replied. He grabbed a young pirate sitting by the door, pointing at Lumian and growling, "How long has he been keeping those fireballs up?"

The young pirate, a bit flustered, glanced at the old clock on the wall and stammered, "Almost... almost fifteen minutes."

Fifteen minutes? Flying Hadmagk's eyelid twitched, and he suddenly looked like he remembered something important.

He immediately cursed at his sailor, "Did you forget about our important deal at the docks? Bastard, is your brain filled with nothing but booze, women, and pride?"

Cursing, Flying Haddock turned and walked out of the Carnival Bar.

His sailor, though dumbfounded, instinctively followed him.

The captain is always right!
The Carnival Bar remained quiet as Lumian finished his Lanti Proof and stood up.
With those crimson-white fireballs still floating around him, he swept his gaze over the pirates once more.
Then he smiled, raised his right hand, brought his index and middle fingers to his lips, and blew softly.
It was like he was blowing away the smoke from a gun after shooting everyone in the bar.
As the pirates' eyes and expressions shifted, Lumian leisurely walked towards the door with his hands in his pockets.
One by one, the pirates instinctively moved out of his way.
Some felt aggrieved, some ground their teeth, and others consoled themselves with thoughts like, It's not fear; those fireballs are just too blinding!
Lumian seemed utterly unafraid of being ambushed as he walked out of the Carnival Bar, almost like he was receiving their admiration and welcome.
...
Late at night, in an inconspicuous hotel room in Banamo Port.
Leaning back in his chair, Lumian said to Franca, "Disguise yourself and spread the word that an unknown adventurer has been provoking all the pirates, claiming they're cowards with no real strength, and that he could crush any pirate's head under his boot."
Franca's mouth twitched slightly. "Fishing again? You're quite the expert at this..."
Lumian chuckled in response. "According to the information we've gathered, Admiral Deep Sea prefers to stay out of the public eye because of his sea monster bloodline. Even if he comes to Banamo Port, he'll likely stay on his flagship, the Newins. If he wants women or food, someone will bring it to him.
"In this situation, we'll have to risk sneaking onto the Newins. It's an alchemical ship from some ancient ruins, and we have no idea what traps or mechanisms it might have. Plus, there are bound to be many Beyonder pirates on board. As a Hunter, we should avoid fighting on someone else's turf.
"I deliberately provoked the pirates in Banamo Port because I know no Pirate Admirals are here right now. I have enough confidence to handle the other notable pirates. They should soon figure this out too. Expecting pirate crews to work together against me overestimates their trust in each other. Who would they rather rob?
"I don't expect the pirates to have collective pride, but they

definitely want to show off their abilities and earn more fear and respect. The pirates in Banamo Port are waiting for a pirate strong enough to deal with me. At that point, when the Newins arrives and Admiral Deep Sea is here, what do you think will happen?"
Jenna suddenly understood.
"If Admiral Deep Sea leaves the Newins and takes action himself, that would be the best outcome. We would be fighting on our terms. Even if he isn't interested, his top men won't miss the chance. With Admiral Deep Sea as their backup, they won't fear failure and will be more willing to challenge you. This will reduce the number of Beyonders on the Newins, giving us our chance."
"Good psychological analysis," Lumian teased.
Jenna shot him a look.
"A good actor needs to understand people's minds."
"And then perform for the 'spectators'?" Lumian joked.
Anthony didn't react.
Franca scoffed. "What if a Pirate King's fleet arrives before the Newins?"
Lumian spread his hands and said, "That's why the adventurer is 'unknown. ' The benefit is that he can disappear without a trace. Change his face and appearance, and we can execute another plan."
"A Conspirer is really an outright schemer..." Franca muttered. "Alright, let's do it."
Lumian then discussed the possibility of using a large-scale plague in Banamo Port, emphasizing the need to secretly distribute preventive medicine to the locals beforehand.
Franca was stunned.
After a few seconds, she said, "You even thought of that... How about we start a plague company? Just kidding, there's some plausibility in this, but in this day and age, there are no vaccines-uh, preventive medicine?"
"Normally, we wouldn't have it, but we can turn to mysticism," Lumian replied. "The Apothecary path specializes in this. We just need to provide them with a number of infected individuals for observation, research, and experimentation. They should be able to create effective preventive or curative medicine. We won't have trouble finding an Apothecary. The Fool Pharmaceutical Company has plenty of them."
Lumian knew from Miss Magician that The Fool Pharmaceutical Company had many ties to the Tarot Club.
Jenna began to calculate.
"A medicine with mystical effects would cost at least 100 verl d'or per bottle. There are probably over ten thousand non-pirate

residents in Banamo Port. We'd need to prepare at least a million verl d'or. We can't expect the Apothecaries from The Fool Pharmaceutical Company to work for free or cover the material costs."
One million verl d'or wasn't a small sum. Even a Sequence 5 Beyonder characteristic only cost around 200,000 verl d'or.
"A million verl d'or to become a demigod is a good deal," Lumian suddenly laughed. "A million verl d'or is just an Admiral Deep Sea. Even if we can't kill him, his top men are valuable too."
Franca sighed and replied, "You're starting to sound a bit like Gehrman Sparrow. But while Gehrman Sparrow treated pirates as his piggy bank, only targeting high-bounty ones, you're aiming to eradicate them completely!"
A plague like that would likely affect thousands, if not tens of thousands, of pirates.
Before Lumian could respond, Franca self-mockingly laughed.
"Poor Admiral Deep Sea. Just sitting on his flagship, doing nothing, and suddenly he's our target."
Lumian chuckled, and said with some realization, "Nothing to pity. A Hunter's job is to create chaos and strife. And your primary job as a Demoness is to bring catastrophe and affliction. It's better to inflict these on pirates than innocent people."
Franca and Jenna fell silent for a moment.
...
Achoo!
Banamo Port, Mason, sitting at the docks with a bottle of rye beer, suddenly sneezed.
He immediately thought of the messenger summoning ritual he had completed that afternoon and the unsettling messenger it had summoned, muttering to himself, "Could that sneeze be some kind of spirituality warning?
"Am I really going to be the protagonist of some occult event, the fool who makes a mistake and attracts an evil god or devil?
"Did the ritual I performed bring some kind of catastrophe to Banamo Port?
"Have hidden dangers and problems started quietly spreading in the shadows?"
Gulping down a large swig of beer, Mason tried to reassure himself that he was just scaring himself.
From afternoon until now, there had been no signs of calamity or reports of strange phenomena!
It was just a messenger summoning. It should be fine!

Chapter 781: Individual Missions

Two days later, at a quiet spot on the docks of Banamo Port.

Jenna, dressed in a black outfit that looked like a cross between a dress and a robe, gazed out over the blue ocean shrouded in a thin fog.

Her task was to monitor the docks and be the first to spot Admiral Deep Sea's flagship, the Newins.

Of course, this was just one of her responsibilities. The most critical part was to ensure no Pirate King's fleet arrived at Banamo Port before the Newins. If that happened, she had to quickly inform Lumian so the unknown adventurer could disappear.

Jenna paced back and forth or found a spot to sit, patiently waiting for her target.

Suddenly, she saw a colossal shape break the surface of the water, emerging from the depths.

The massive object was jet black and metallic, with seawater cascading off its surface. It resembled an elongated, inflated spindle with a thin, curved metal tube extending from its top like a snail's eye stalk.

In the next moment, the metal tube retracted, and the upper half of the behemoth split open, unfolding outward to reveal a broad deck, numerous cannons, and hundreds of pirates. Masts and sails were raised.

Jenna was momentarily mesmerized. Though Lumian had described how Bone Splitter Basil's Black Octopus submerged, surfaced, and unfolded, seeing it in person was stunning.

There was a strong sense of mechanical beauty!

Moreover, the behemoth was no smaller than the latest steam-powered ocean liners, vastly superior to traditional sailing pirate ships.

Jenna didn't need further confirmation to know this was Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine's flagship, the Newins.

She quickly deduced that the Newins had arrived alone, without the Black Octopus.

Since Vice Admiral Dusk Bulatov Ivan became the King of Dusk, other ships in Admiral Deep Sea's fleet rarely traveled with the flagship. The Newins and the Black Octopus could submerge and travel secretly, which other ships couldn't do. Forcing them to follow would only expose Howl Constantine's movements.

This was one reason Franca had targeted Admiral Deep Sea.

What a beautiful piece of alchemical machinery... Jenna thought, staring at the Newins.

Her father had been a worker, and his appreciation for machinery

had deeply influenced her and her brother Julien.
With Trier full of all sorts of useful and odd machines, Julien had almost given up his faith in the Eternal Blazing Sun in his youth to join the God of Steam and Machinery's Church.
Jenna withdrew her gaze and walked away from the dock, somewhat worried about something else.
Her brother Julien would return to Trier in just over a month after his exchange studies. She didn't want him to continue living in this dangerous city built on a "caldera." She wanted Julien to settle in a place with strong official forces but not as dangerous as Trier. Port LeSeur, where he was currently staying, or another similar town would be ideal.
Jenna knew she couldn't persuade Julien. He would worry about her unless she found a reliable person to marry. Besides, Julien had grown up in Trier, and it offered him more opportunities. *How could he leave his hometown?*
I need to find a way, something temporary to convince him. Permanent relocation is something Julien would never accept. As Franca said, maybe try for three years, then another three... Jenna didn't consider having Anthony directly "hypnotize" Julian.
Just then, two drunken pirates stumbled onto the dock and spotted Jenna in her hooded, dress-like outfit.
They looked her up and down for a few seconds, exchanged glances, and blocked her path.
"Hey lady, name your price."
"If you don't want to, we'll just decide for ourselves!"
As they spoke, the pirates reached out to grab Jenna.
In Banamo Port, this wasn't uncommon. Local women either worked as streetwalkers in protected places like bars or stayed home to avoid attracting pirates. The best outcome would be the arrival of the sheriff and receive compensation, and the worst would be being killed on the spot by pirates unwilling to pay, their bodies thrown into the sea or taken aboard a ship and sold elsewhere.
Before the pirates could touch her, they suddenly found themselves engulfed in silent, evil black flames.
They felt a surge of fear and pain, sobering up instantly, and turned to flee in terror.
As they ran, they screamed, "Witch!"
"Witch!"
Jenna felt a bit of her Witch potion digest from their fear and pain. She watched them weaken under the black flames, collapsing and dying as they ran.
Jenna then faced a dilemma.

Should I maintain the mysterious and evil image of a Witch or follow my instincts and take the money from their corpses...
...
In a bar in Banamo Port.
Anthony sat on a barstool with a mug of beer, listening to a pirate across from him boast.
His task for the past two days had been to blend in with the pirates, monitor, and guide the "public opinion."
Although Lumian had analyzed a lot, he wasn't entirely sure how the pirate community would react. Human nature was unpredictable, and among so many pirates, it was normal for some to act in ways that defied logic.
A Conspirer couldn't predict events with certainty like a high-ranked Seer, Prophet, or Spectator. They needed to prepare extra measures to ensure things went as planned and not fall apart at the first deviation.
So, Anthony frequented the pirates' favorite bars, making as many friends as possible to understand their reactions to the unknown adventurer's provocations. He identified voices that could significantly influence the outcome and used his Hypnotist abilities to quietly guide and change the attitudes of a few influential pirates, ensuring the public opinion matched Lumian's goals.
This large-scale, covert guidance helped Anthony digest a good portion of his Hypnotist potion.
It involved actual hypnosis and seemed to indirectly guide the collective psyche of the pirates in Banamo Port.
Gulping down golden beer, the pirate beside Anthony admired his new friend.
To him, this new friend was not only amiable but also a good listener among pirates, not interrupting to show off during others' stories.
Holy Lord of Storms, it's rare to meet a pirate like this. I finally got to finish my story! The pirate Stilwell praised the god in his heart and asked Anthony, "Interested in joining our crew?"
Anthony smiled and replied, "I don't think I'm skilled enough to be one of you."
"Haha." Stilwell laughed proudly.
Anthony glanced around and lowered his voice, "Have you heard about the unknown adventurer?"
Stilwell's smile vanished instantly. "Yeah, I heard. There's so many pirate captains here, but none have taught that adventurer a lesson!
What are they waiting for? This is their chance to gain more fame.

They might even become the tenth Pirate Admiral!"
In his rant, Stilwell never mentioned challenging the arrogant adventurer himself.
Suddenly, a commotion erupted in the bar.
"What's happening?" Stilwell picked up his beer and mumbled, heading towards the table.
After a while, he returned to the bar, excitedly telling Anthony, "Admiral Deep Sea is in Banamo!"
"Admiral Deep Sea is here?" Anthony looked delighted.
"Yes, someone will teach that bastard a lesson!" Stilwell sat back on his stool, enthusiastically, "That's a Pirate Admiral! Every Pirate Admiral earned their title through real battles, not just boasting. They could kill all the adventurers here if they wanted to!"
When Stilwell finished, Anthony echoed, "I'm already looking forward to it."
Gulp. Stilwell picked up his beer mug again and took a sip.
He boasted, "I thought Admiral Deep Sea would come to end the humiliation caused by those so-called notable pirates."
"Why do you say that?" Anthony asked curiously.
Stilwell glanced at him. "You don't know?"
Anthony smiled and explained, "Although I'm from Intis, our boss often intercepts ships in the Berserk Sea and rarely comes to the Fog Sea."
"That explains it." Stilwell nodded understandingly. He lowered his voice, "We suspect Admiral Deep Sea comes to Banamo Port every year to find that legendary treasure."
"Treasure? The Lost Newins?" Anthony acted like a genuine pirate.
The Lost Newins was one of the most famous treasure legends on the Five Seas, rumored to be at the bottom of a certain part of the Fog Sea.
It was said to be the site of an ancient civilization of intelligent beings, long destroyed. Strange items often appeared in the area, all pointing to the ancient Newins.
"Yes." Stilwell nodded emphatically. "Think about it. Admiral Deep Sea's flagship was found in some ruins and named the Newins. Anyone would suspect those ruins are the Lost Newins! Besides, the area where the Newins supposedly sank isn't far from here."

Chapter 782: Clamor

Banamo Port, Carnival Bar.

Adventurer Mason had donned the loose pants and thick jacket favored by pirates. He looked toward the unknown adventurer drinking strong liquor with his back to him, feeling a constant tension.

He wasn't worried about being hurt but was anxious about when this kind of life would end.

Pirates were never reasonable; they would always vent their anger on others. After no one stepped up to respond to the arrogant unknown adventurer, many pirates tried to take their anger out on other adventurers in Banamo Port.

Frequent adventurers in Banamo Port were used to a life of hiding. They would never openly identify as adventurers, disguising themselves as other professions instead. Otherwise, bodies would be found in alleys or floating near the docks.

In this pirate-dominated port, being an adventurer was clearly a dangerous and elusive profession. People like Mason had regular identities to disguise themselves, sometimes even joining pirate crews to help gather supplies while stationed in Banamo Port.

Taking on commissions wouldn't expose an adventurer's identity because many pirates also took jobs for rewards. For example, if they killed a rival pirate, they could collect a bounty through connections.

Who wouldn't want that?

Pirates approached tasks differently from adventurers. They would first identify the mission issuer and decide if they could kill the client directly. Some adventurers would naturally turn into bandits in lawless areas.

Mason had recently lost his job at a trading company. With his distinct, non-native features, he had to dress as a pirate to avoid trouble.

His thoughts drifted to a corner of the Carnival Bar near the window.

The walls were charred, the glass cracked, and overturned tables and chairs lay amidst two charred bodies that had been burning for a long time.

These were two pirates.

Earlier that afternoon, they had recognized an adventurer they had encountered before and decided to vent their malice on him.

The unknown adventurer at the bar counter didn't even turn his head, summoning one fiery raven after another, blasting the pirates apart and burning them.

This convinced the watching pirates that the unknown adventurer was a man of his word.
If he said he would kill, he would kill. If he promised punishment for crossing the line, there would be punishment, even in a pirate port watched by thousands of pirates and many Beyonders.
And the pirates' captain didn't dare retaliate.
Mason had witnessed the entire scene. He noticed that the two pirates were familiar with the Pyromaniac's abilities and were quite skilled, with one being a Low-Sequence Beyonder. Despite their precautions, they couldn't escape the ravens. They were covered in flames by the window before they could escape from the center of the bar.
This filled Mason with admiration and longing.
When will I have such power?
When can I become an adventurer who can intimidate so many pirates?
Mason had intended to "kindly" help the pirates deal with the bodies, but to his regret, their captain and first mate quickly arrived and collected their "inheritance."
I should stick close to this adventurer. If I'm recognized, I'm done for...
Mason muttered, gulping down his dark beer. *How did my life change so drastically?*
Though he hadn't been harmed, he felt implicated.
This heightened his fear that he might have brought disaster to Banamo Port, though it didn't seem like a disaster yet. He hoped it would end when the unknown adventurer left or a Pirate Admiral or King arrived.
Never perform rituals you don't fully understand... Mason warned himself.
He then raised his glass to his reflection on the wall, toasting to his resolution.
...
In the shadow, Franca was intently observing the Carnival Bar inside and out.
This was her task.
Even though Lumian was vigilant and prepared, he could still be ambushed. The Beyonder world had many strange, unpredictable, and hard-to-defend abilities, rituals, and spells. Thus, Franca stayed hidden, monitoring the surroundings from another angle, ready to intervene or provide a Mirror Substitution.
In the past few days of wandering around Banamo Port with Lumian, Franca had seen pirates drinking, chatting, joking, eating, gambling, venting, and sleeping, making them seem no different

from ordinary people. She felt a bit guilty about the possible plague plan. But after witnessing pirate battles and hearing about killings, kidnappings, bullying, robbery, and rape, she genuinely felt that letting these scum die from the plague would purify the world and be a good deed.
Ignoring her hunger, Franca grumbled about Lumian, This guy, doesn't he know it's been an hour past lunch? You get to eat, but I don't! Based on our previous understanding, shouldn't we shake off potential trackers, hide back at the inn, and let me rest and eat something?
Despite her complaints, Franca continued to dutifully monitor the surroundings.
At that moment, a few pirates entered, bringing a lively, joyful, and excited atmosphere to different tables.
Hmm... Franca melded into the shadows, sticking to the wall, and stealthily approached a group of pirates to listen in.
"Admiral Deep Sea is really here?"
"The Newins has already docked!"
"Do they know about the adventurer?"
"..."
Oh, Admiral Deep Sea is finally here... Franca silently confirmed with a guess.
Since Jenna hadn't issued a warning, it meant no Pirate King had arrived in Banamo Port. Franca began to anticipate Admiral Deep Sea's reaction and actions.
She was sure Admiral Deep Sea and his key subordinates were aware of the unknown adventurer's provocation.
It was a simple deduction.
Since Admiral Deep Sea was avoiding the King of Dusk, he would first confirm the situation in Banamo Port before coming to resupply.
The common practice was to send lesser-known pirates from the fleet on other ships to scout Banamo Port. If Banamo Port was a regular stop, trusted subordinates might be stationed there long-term, reporting back promptly.
Of course, local forces could also provide warnings. In any case, Admiral Deep Sea would be well aware of recent events in Banamo Port; otherwise, he wouldn't surface the Newins.
Franca calmed herself, no longer distracted by hunger.
But like the pirates, she waited half an hour without seeing Admiral Deep Sea or his key subordinates, growing puzzled.
Why haven't they shown up?
Could it be that Admiral Deep Sea is also a cautious person? But Lumian is only showing the strength of a strong Sequence 6. This

crafty guy is using crimson-white flames, not the Reaper's white flames...
Franca thought carefully and understood the reason.
If she were in his shoes, targeted by the King of Dusk, she wouldn't cause trouble right after arriving at a port. She would complete the resupply first and prepare for another dive. That way, even if something unexpected happened, they could leave Banamo Port immediately and not complete their primary objective here.
Also, Lumian, the unknown adventurer, had been in Banamo Port for two or three days. He didn't seem to be hunting bounties of lesser known pirates, as if he were waiting for something.
This could make people suspicious of his true intentions. Admiral Deep Sea would naturally be cautious.
Phew... Franca sighed silently.
Her gaze continued to sweep across the Carnival Bar, wary of any surprises.
In the process, her eyes inevitably swept over Lumian, noticing her companion's slight smile and good mood, holding a cup of amber-colored Lanti Proof mixed with something unknown.
...
Lumian played with his glass, using his Hunter's exceptional hearing to roughly understand why the pirates were suddenly excited and anxious.
His target had arrived!
Lumian wasn't surprised since he already knew-Jenna had come by earlier and left a note under his hand, concealed by shadows.
Knowing Admiral Deep Sea wouldn't come looking for him immediately, Lumian remained calm, acting unaware of the commotion behind him.
He glanced at the bartender trying to control his expression and smiled.
"The wind is quite noisy today," Lumian said.
The bartender didn't know how to respond, forcing a stiff smile. "True."
Lumian said nothing more, feeling his emotions and state change.
To be honest, he felt a bit nervous about facing a Pirate Admiral with his fleet. But it also made his blood boil slightly.
He had never been one to shy away from challenges. Since becoming a Hunter, he had tasted the allure of challenges even more.
With that thought, Lumian raised his cup of Lumian to his lips, tilted his head back, and drank it all in one go.

Chapter 783: Boarding the Ship

Banamo Port, near the docks.

Jenna hid in the shadows, watching Anthony mingle with the crowd, blending in with the pirates.

She didn't deliberately track the famous pirates who arrived on the Newins when it docked. On the one hand, she feared being discovered, which would alert Admiral Deep Sea to a grand consOriginal awaiting him at Banamo Port. On the other hand, she didn't need to follow them to know the whereabouts of the Newins' first mate, second mate, and boatswain.

The pirates in Banamo Port were eagerly anticipating Admiral Deep Sea or his capable subordinates to teach the unknown adventurer a lesson.

Naturally, they kept an eye on these individuals and shared information with their companions and friends!

In other words, with so much attention on the situation, most of the pirates in Banamo Port had become unofficial reporters. Admiral Deep Sea's key subordinates couldn't go anywhere without being noticed and widely discussed.

If they used stealth abilities or invisibility, they might avoid the curious eyes spread throughout Banamo Port. However, they were currently gathering supplies, which meant they couldn't hide the large quantities of goods.

Thus, information flowed swiftly into Anthony's ears: "Great Shark is at Firth Trading Company."

"Ship Destroyer is heading towards the Carnival Bar!"

"Holy Lord of Storms, those guys are meeting at Blackstone Square!"

"They're one street away from the Carnival Bar!"

"They've stopped for now, discussing something!"

"They seem to be heading to Old Dante's for large barrels of pale ale!"

"..."

Anthony sensed the commotion among the pirates, watching them leave the current street and head towards the Carnival Bar.

He stood up as well to avoid standing out.

During this, he gave Jenna's hidden shadow a look.

Jenna understood immediately, using the shadows along the street to slip through the growing crowd towards the Carnival Bar.

...

Lumian sipped the freshly poured amber-colored Lanti Proof, nodding to himself.

He then looked at the bartender behind the counter, smiling as he said, "You might want to move the valuable liquor and items out of

here for now. It's probably best if no one stays inside."
The bartender froze for a few seconds before responding hastily, "Alright!"
No one wanted to alert Lumian by passing on messages that might affect the plan, but he guessed something was brewing from the pirates gathering outside the bar.
He was both excited and nervous, knowing the impending conflict would take place in the Carnival Bar, where he was.
Watching the bartender instruct the waiters to move valuable items out the back door, Lumian pulled out a blank sketchbook and an ink pen, casually sketching as he asked, "How much is your bar worth, including this two-story building?"
"Uh..." The bartender was stunned again.
What does this mean?
Is he implying the bar might get destroyed in the upcoming conflict, collapsing the whole building?
Recalling the powerful crimson-white fireballs, the bartender grew even more anxious, forcing a smile as he said, "Are you offering compensation? You decide, or let the loser pay..."
"This building is a simple structure built by locals. It's definitely cheap. Your bar caters to low-level pirates, so the furniture and décor are all the cheapest kind..." Lumian continued his assessment without looking up, still sketching in the blank book.
"Yes, that's right." The bartender nodded quickly, agreeing.
Lumian looked up, shaking his head with a smile. "Whatever I say, you agree. It's making things difficult for me."
"..." The bartender closed his mouth, unsure how to respond.
Lumian lowered his head again. "How about 2,000 verl d'or?"
"Okay." The bartender used a different word, not even trying to bargain.
Lumian didn't pause his sketching, his tone calm.
"Payment will be after assessing the damage. If the big pirates coming later want to help compensate, that works too."
"Alright." The bartender responded quickly.
He looked around, wishing he could sprout wings and fly out of the Carnival Bar.
From their conversation, he feared staying could lead to him becoming a mangled corpse.
A few minutes later, the waiters had moved the few valuable items out, leaving only the cheap goods in the bar.
The bartender left through the back door, and the other patrons, including Mason, exited to wait and watch outside.
They didn't dare stay in this anticipated battlefield.
This was the lesson of experience.

Lumian sketched for a while, then put down his pen and slowly sipped the remaining Lanti Proof.
A few minutes later, Franca sneaked into the shadows near the bar and whispered, "Admiral Deep Sea didn't come, but his first mate, Great Shark, and others are almost here. They'll be here in about two minutes."
Lumian picked up the ink pen again and continued sketching in the book.
He chuckled and said, "Remember to prepare the 2,000 verl d'or compensation, and when we get back, return the 1,000 verl d'or bounty for summoning the messenger."
"Ah?" Franca was a bit surprised.
Lumian chuckled and said, "All of this is to help you digest Pleasure. You should cover all expenses, including consumed Beyonder items."
"No problem." Franca wasn't resisting; she was just surprised Lumian brought it up suddenly.
She watched Lumian finish his sketch on the blank page, curious as she asked, "Why not just take out the Pride Armor, disguise it as a person with a robe, and have it sit in this chair facing away from the incoming pirates?"
With Lumian present, the Pride Armor couldn't be used, so it might as well serve some purpose by being placed here.
"Do you really want this building destroyed?" Lumian chuckled. "Besides, the Pride Armor can't use Lie and can't disguise itself as me. The subordinates of Admiral Deep Sea would notice something's wrong before even entering."
As he spoke, Lumian finished the last stroke on the blank page.
It was a sketch outlined in deep blue ink, depicting Lumian himself.
The paper gradually turned translucent, and the sketch of Lumian suddenly came to life, thickening and expanding like a balloon.
In an instant, a stoic-faced Lumian appeared before the bar counter, blocked by Lumian's body.
It had the instinct to complete a few minutes of combat and possessed some of Lumian's abilities, obeying the sketcher's commands.
As the sketched Lumian sat in a chair facing away from the bar door, Lumian transformed into a shadow creature, disappearing from the bar.
Soon, Great Shark, the first mate of the Newins, arrived at the Carnival Bar with a few companions of similar strength, surrounded by a crowd of pirates.
The tall, muscular, bald Great Shark glanced at the unknown

adventurer calmly sitting at the bar and gestured, leading the way through the door.
As the Beyonders from the Newins entered the bar, Lumian, disguised and watching from the window, placed his right hand on the glass.
A black mark hidden under his clothes glowed.
Bottle of Fiction!
He trapped the Carnival Bar inside the Bottle of Fiction, setting the condition for exit to be non-Beyonders.
Lumian turned, and in the chaos of the pirates losing sight of the bar's interior, he squeezed through the crowd and headed to a nearby alley, teleporting to the docks with Franca.
They met Jenna and Anthony at the designated spot, using shadows and Psychological Invisibility to remain hidden as they boarded the alchemical ship Newins.
Compared to when they arrived, there were fewer pirates on the ship, just enough to maintain basic vigilance.
Lumian wasn't worried their actions would alert Admiral Deep Sea.
According to gathered intel, Howl Constantine wasn't a Beyonder of the Devil pathway and couldn't sense malice. His abilities resembled a Sequence 5 Ocean Songster of the Storm pathway, and according to the Tarot Club, Admiral Deep Sea had no ties to the Church of Storms.
Thus, Lumian had Jenna confirm if the Black Octopus had followed the Newins to Banamo Port-the Black Octopus's captain, Bone Splitter Basil, was a Devil.
Considering the changing situation at the Carnival Bar might alert Admiral Deep Sea, Lumian and his team didn't waste time, swiftly sneaking into the ship's hold.
Within a minute, they found a lone pirate in a corridor room.
Franca checked the surrounding mechanical devices for alarms, then whispered to shadow-form Lumian, "It's show time."
Lumian immediately slipped into the room, moving behind the lone pirate and emerging, giving a harrumph.
Two flashes of white light, and the pirate fell unconscious.
Anthony entered the room quickly, beginning hypnosis.
Jenna and Franca guarded the door from the shadows, soon hearing friendly conversation inside, "Where's the Admiral?"
"In the captain's cabin."
"The Admiral must have a powerful backer to be one of the most famous pirates, right?"
"I don't know, but the Admiral is indeed mysterious."
"..."
After a brief inquiry, Anthony made the pirate forget he had such a

friend on board.
They then sneaked to the upper deck, stopping outside the captain's cabin.
Lumian's eyes twitched as he gazed at the silver-white metal door.
He realized Admiral Deep Sea's possible pathway and sequence.
On an alchemical ship like this, an Ocean Songster's power might not be inferior to being in the deep sea or the air!
While Lumian pondered, two pirates pushed a food cart to the captain's cabin using a mechanical lift.

Chapter 784: Mask

Lumian immediately retreated into the nearby shadows, closely watching the slowly opening metal door of the captain's cabin.

As the cart filled with various foods was pushed in, he finally saw their target, Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine.

Though he had heard many rumors and seen the wanted posters, nothing compared to witnessing the reality of his sea monster lineage firsthand.

Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine's face looked as if a translucent, palm-sized octopus clung to it, with numerous slimy tentacles hanging down to his chest. His deep blue, almost black hair was thick and coarse, falling to his shoulders, and his body was entirely wrapped in a black cloak, even his hands hidden within.

He was nothing like a normal human.

Lumian couldn't help but feel this was unusual.

His face, fused with an octopus, was exposed, so what was there to hide about his body?

Even if he was truly an octopus beneath the cloak, no one around would be surprised!

The only reason to cover his body so tightly was if there was something even more unpresentable there.

Puzzled, Lumian carefully observed Howl Constantine's fate.

Being in shadow form didn't prevent him from doing this since shadow beings could still "see" the real world, though the perspective was slightly different.

As the two pirates arranged the food on the long table in the captain's cabin, Lumian's eyes reflected the illusory river of fate composed of complex mercury symbols.

Given that they were less than fifteen meters apart, Lumian extended his right palm, letting it stay at the edge of the shadow, and remotely touched Howl Constantine's river of fate.

Most of Admiral Deep Sea's fate fragments instantly materialized, flowing turbulently.

Knowing time was limited, Lumian could only browse briefly.

He saw Howl Constantine diving in the dark, lightless ocean depths, fighting a half-giant over two and a half meters tall wielding a huge sword. He watched as Admiral Deep Sea passed through ruins filled with bizarre buildings and saw his future self removing the translucent octopus from his face...

Removing the octopus clinging to his face? It isn't Howl Constantine's face; it's a mask? He isn't a descendant of sea monsters? Lumian was stunned. Reflexively, he decided on the

fate fragment he would exchange.
It was a fragment of Howl Constantine being injured on the seabed.
In this fate fragment, back when he was only Sequence 7 or 6, Howl Constantine failed to return to the surface in time, suffering the crushing pressure of deep water and the suffocating sensation of liquid flooding his lungs.
This was different in severity from Moran Admiral Deep Sea's fate fragment of lust outburst, which had irrevocably changed Moran's fate, forcing him to an early death. In contrast, this fragment merely influenced Howl Constantine's subsequent exploration style, making him more cautious. However, Lumian couldn't find a more suitable fragment in such a short time.
As fate began to swap, Howl Constantine, who was seeing off the two pirates, suddenly turned his gaze towards Lumian's hiding spot.
His spirituality had warned him!
Almost simultaneously, Admiral Deep Sea's eyes lit up with intense lightning.
With a crackling sound, thick lightning struck Lumian's hiding spot, hitting the wall and shattering into countless tiny electric serpents, which spread out, covering the area with their fierce and erratic energy, using the properties of the metal door, walls, and floor to launch indiscriminate attacks inside and outside the captain's cabin.
The two food-delivering pirates were hit first, their bodies trembling and convulsing as if performing a grotesque dance.
Their skin quickly charred.
Amid the cracking sound, mirrors hidden in the shadows where Franca and Jenna were hiding shattered, but the Demonesses' figures did not appear.
...
At the Carnival Bar, Great Shark Jorg and his companions, including Ship Destroyer, had just entered the hall and were staring at the unknown adventurer's back. Before they could speak, the noisy surroundings abruptly fell silent. The pirates' chatter and conversations seemed muffled, vanishing instantly.
Wh- Great Shark Jorg instinctively looked towards the window, seeing the dim sunlight through the fog replaced by deep darkness.
At that moment, Lumian, sitting at the bar, turned on his stool. His expression was indifferent, his gaze calm, looking at the few big pirates as if they were dead men.
A huge crimson-white fireball shot out.
Boom!

Amidst the flames and wind from the explosion, the pirates either used their agility or abilities to dodge in different directions.
Behind Ship Destroyer, Lumian's figure swiftly emerged in the chaos, letting out a hum.
Two beams of white light shot from his nose, causing Ship Destroyer to faint instantly.
Witnessing this, Great Shark Jorg felt a chill down his spine, instinctively muttering to himself, "Formidable..."
...
Aboard the Newins.
Having used the Lightning Strike ability and created an area attack effect utilizing the current environment, Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine, had a figure suddenly appear behind him.
It was Franca, dressed in an assassin's suit.
Franca gripped an almost invisible triangular spike in her right hand while raising her left palm, with an iron-black spiked ring targeting Howl Constantine.
Lightning flickered in her eyes.
As Franca used Psychic Piercing on Howl Constantine, Jenna appeared by the door, throwing a Louis d'or at Admiral Deep Sea, seemingly to distract him and make him momentarily ignore Franca's assassination attempt.
A golden brooch carved into a gorse flower was pinned to her chest.
Covered in gray-white scales, Anthony appeared in the corridor, with tiny electric serpents still crawling over his body, paralyzing him and preventing rapid movement.
But this didn't stop Anthony from using his ability.
Staring at Admiral Deep Sea, with a translucent octopus clinging to his face, his pupils turned vertical, glowing golden.
Awe!
This ability made the target feel as if they encountered a true dragon, panicking instantly.
As fate began to swap and Howl Constantine noticed the anomaly, he struck out lightning. At that moment, Lumian teleported into the captain's cabin, landing on a wooden chair by the window.
Soon, tiny electric serpents covered the area, but they didn't last long due to the wooden chair's material.
This caused Lumian's body to show signs of paralysis.
However, he didn't reveal himself because he was now a true shadow creature, and no shadow being would leave the shadows due to a mild electric shock.
Lumian chose to stay in the shadow provided by the wooden chair, quietly watching the upcoming battle.

During the fate exchange, he couldn't attack Howl Constantine, which would interrupt the process.
So, the next step was to see if Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, three Beyonders below Sequence 5, could hold off Admiral Deep Sea for at least two minutes!
Of course, if they really needed to kill Howl Constantine, Anthony could do it quickly with the Winter is Coming revolver, but that was impractical and went against their original goal.
Awe and Psychic Piercing hit Howl Constantine, but the Admiral's face, fused with the translucent octopus, glowed faintly, protecting his soul and spirit, causing only minor effects.
As his octopus-like face dimmed slightly, Howl Constantine, puzzled by the unfamiliar assassins, suspected some adventurer group wanted to make a name for themselves and earn a huge bounty. Enduring the dizziness, he grabbed an obsidian trident from the nearby weapon rack and thrust it at Franca.
The trident immediately surged with violently flickering silver-white lightning, its heavy tip seemingly trying to pull Franca onto itself.
Crack!
Franca's body, clad in the assassin's suit, shattered into numerous mirror fragments, while Jenna threw a silent black flame at Howl Constantine before hiding in the shadows again.
Anthony also pulled out the exquisite Winter is Coming revolver, aiming at Admiral Deep Sea for a standard shot.
The gunshot had just sounded when a sharp wind pierced everyone's ears.
Howl Constantine, wrapped in a whirlwind, flew into the air, avoiding the yellow bullet and eerie black flame.
He then pointed the obsidian trident at Anthony.
The silver-white currents on the trident converged into thick lightning, shooting out.
Anthony, experienced as ever, immediately dove away from the door, changing his position and avoiding the direct hit from the lightning, though the resulting tiny electric serpents still affected him, causing his body to tremble and paralyze.
The two pirates, just recovering from the previous shock, were struck by the new wave, falling unconscious and twitching on the ground.
Franca and Jenna were also affected by the indiscriminate attack, revealing themselves from their hidden states.
Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine, showed no joy or bloodthirsty emotion but grew more vigilant, his octopus-like face showing doubt.

There should be one more assassin!
Why hasn't he appeared?
What is he preparing?
At that moment, out of the corner of his eye, How! Constantine saw a figure leisurely sitting on the wooden chair near the window.
The figure had black hair, blue eyes, a handsome face, and wore a thick dark jacket, reclining against the chair with his right foot resting on his left knee, a mocking smile on his face.

Chapter 785: Performance

Seeing the assassin who had been hiding suddenly sit openly on a chair by the window, calmly watching him as if he didn't care about the ongoing battle, Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine, felt a sudden heavy weight in his heart.

Such a posture and expression suggested that the opponent didn't consider him a threat and was absolutely confident in dealing with him.

That's why he didn't attack immediately to support his companions but instead sat there, arrogantly smiling and observing.

Without any hesitation, Howl Constantine instinctively aimed his obsidian trident at Lumian.

A bolt of silver-white lightning formed in his hand, amplified by the trident's tip, and shot out like a raging thunder serpent towards Lumian.

Lumian kept his right foot on his left knee, his face bearing a mocking smile as if Howl Constantine's desperate counterattack was just child's play, incapable of changing the outcome at all.

Of course, this was just a front he put on.

In reality, he couldn't attack Howl Constantine or leave the hundred-meter range, or else the Fate Exchange would be interrupted.

But not being able to attack didn't mean he couldn't influence the current battle. Lumian left his shadow form and deliberately revealed his presence to Howl Constantine, using himself as bait to attract most of Admiral Deep Sea's attention and create a sense of pressure and fear, forcing him to react hastily and increase the chance of making mistakes.

Even a Hunter who couldn't strike, speak, or communicate could still provoke, scheme, and set traps!

The thick silver-white thunder serpent struck Lumian.

With a crack, Lumian's figure shattered like a mirror, leaving only the quickly charred wooden chair behind in the ravaging lightning.

He disappeared again, and the thunder serpent, constrained by the chair's material, didn't dissipate much.

This made Howl Constantine anxious, considering whether to break through the window and dive into the sea.

Underwater, he feared no Beyonder below demigod level!

Even many Saints couldn't dive into the depths to fight him!

Just then, he felt his limbs and body being bound layer by layer, making it difficult to move or turn the obsidian trident quickly.

The bindings tightened rapidly.
Taking advantage of Lumian drawing away most of Howl Constantine's attention and caution, Franca had set up the spider silk of a Demoness of Pleasure, entangling Admiral Deep Sea layer by layer.
Faced with this restricted situation, Howl Constantine stopped and let the translucent octopus on his face glow with dawn-like brilliance.
The light suddenly exploded into countless fragments, sweeping through the captain's cabin like a storm.
The long table with food shattered into pieces, the metal walls were marked with deep scratches, and Franca and Jenna's figures shattered into countless mirror fragments again, while the invisible spider silk broke inch by inch, unable to restrain Howl Constantine any longer.
In the corridor, away from the captain's cabin door, Anthony was unaffected by the light storm, as was Lumian outlined beside him.
Lumian placed his hand on the metal sliding door of the staircase, using his contractual ability.
He enclosed the area within the Bottle of Fiction, with the entry and exit condition being female.
This effectively blocked any rescue attempts by the pirates, preventing interference in their battle. Except for teams with female captains, most pirate ships had very few female Beyonders, if any at all. The non-Beyonder women on board were merely ship prostitutes, incapable of becoming regular pirates.
...
Outside the Carnival Bar.
The real pirates, the disguised Mason, and the rest simultaneously noticed that the glass windows no longer reflected the scene of Great Shark Jörg and the others fighting the unknown adventurer.
The glass appeared dim, showing the bar's interior with no bartender or customers.
"What happened?" a pirate asked loudly, uncertainly.
"What ability was used?" Similar questions echoed.
They all suspected the unknown adventurer was behind the changes, as Great Shark and his crew wouldn't hide their fight; they would want to showcase their strength to more pirates.
Within the Bottle of Fiction.
Great Shark Jörg, wearing black gloves, was surrounded by signs of explosions and charred marks.
He had timely distorted the unknown adventurer's attack intent, avoiding injury in the recent bombardment.
However, his companion, Ship Destroyer, another Beyonder of the

Hunter pathway, had long been unconscious from a combination of Beyonder powers and explosion damage.
The other pirates were also scattered, none unscathed.
Gazing at the unknown black-haired, blue-eyed adventurer several meters away, Great Shark Jörg cursed the teleportation ability.
Just as he was about to shift positions and attempt a Bribe, the handsome adventurer's figure rapidly faded like a projection and disappeared.
Worried it was another teleportation, Great Shark Jörg dove to the side, turning to look behind him.
Nothing happened.
Jörg and the remaining pirates, suspicious and tense, maneuvered cautiously multiple times, but the adventurer never reappeared.
Finally, the bald Great Shark began to grasp the situation.
That was just an illusion?
We fought an illusion and nearly lost?
Where did the real one go?
Realizing this, Great Shark Jörg blurted out, "Sh*t! The Newins!"
The unknown adventurer's real target was the Newins and the Admiral!
Jörg and the others grew anxious but were trapped in the Bottle of Fiction, unable to get out.
After trying several methods and abilities without success, they resorted to violent disassembly.
...
Aboard the Newins.
As the light storm began to subside, Jenna quickly appeared behind Admiral Deep Sea, in a blind spot created by his own body.
Then, using all her strength, she stabbed a dagger covered in silent black flames into Howl Constantine's back.
Although he couldn't turn or redirect the trident in time, Howl Constantine remained unfazed.
From his cloak emerged a silver-white lightning bolt that struck Jenna at a speed too fast to dodge.
Countless tiny electric serpents coursed over Jenna's body, but she seemed largely unharmed and only slightly slowed.
Pfft!
The dagger covered in black flames pierced Howl Constantine's black cloak.
At the beginning of the fight, Jenna had thrown a Louis d'or at Howl Constantine, not to seek luck but to activate the Decency brooch, completing a Bribe that significantly weakened his attacks, defenses, and controls against her for a while!
Since then, neither the rampaging lightning nor the light storm

had affected her as much as she let on.
Her frantic dodging and use of the Mirror Substitution were meant to psychologically deceive Admiral Deep Sea!
She didn't expect Howl Constantine to be unaware of the Bribe ability, given that his deputy was likely a Briber. Instead, she performed as if the Bribe had failed, leading him to attribute the Louis d'or toss to another ability.
At the start, Howl Constantine might still have guarded against the Bribe, but in the heat of battle, and with time running short, he instinctively responded without caution.
Thus, he ignored the Bribe from before and didn't stop Jenna's assassination!
With a pfft, the black-flamed dagger pierced Howl Constantine's cloak and flesh.
Acting was for a better assassination!
After the successful strike, Jenna felt a strong resistance and wriggling flesh as if alive, preventing further progress with the dagger despite her full strength.
She abandoned force, instead channeling the black flames into Howl Constantine's body.
As the black flames surged, Admiral Deep Sea howled in pain.
Franca seized the opportunity to reach Howl Constantine's side, stabbing the transparent Wintry Blade into Admiral Deep Sea.
The Wintry Blade pierced the skin and flesh but couldn't go deeper into Howl Constantine's body.
But it was enough.
Howl Constantine's body stiffened as if frozen, and his thoughts became sluggish.
Franca slid to Jenna's side, retracting the Wintry Blade.
Simultaneously, she flipped out a compact mirror with her left hand, reflecting Howl Constantine's body.
Then, with her right hand, she smeared black flames on the mirror's surface.
Demoness' curse!
Black flames erupted from Howl Constantine's body, burning it but not touching the octopus on his face.
Howl Constantine let out a pained shriek, breaking free from the stiffness and mental fog, slamming the obsidian trident onto the metal floor.
Blinding lightning burst forth.

Chapter 786: Face

Arcs of silver lightning shot from the obsidian trident, turning the entire captain's cabin into a hell of electricity.

Despite having Bribed Howl Constantine and weakened his attacks, Jenna didn't dare risk her fragile body against the powerful lightning at such close range.

She and Franca shattered into pieces amid the dancing arcs, reflecting the blinding light.

Their figures reappeared at the cabin door, where lightning still raged.

Franca didn't hesitate. She grabbed Jenna's arm and activated the last gem on her Seven-Stone Bracelet before the paralysis set in.

Blink!

They vanished from the cabin door, blinking to a wooden table in a room diagonally opposite.

During this process, Franca and Jenna saw metal panels sliding open on the cabin ceiling, revealing several dark holes.

With a splash, blue seawater poured into the captain's cabin like a waterfall, and the metal door shut tight.

When Franca and Jenna's figures reappeared, their bodies still crackled with residual electricity, and they trembled uncontrollably.

Immediately, the last gem on the Seven-Stone Bracelet shattered, leaving only the two diamonds representing Teleport.

In the corridor near the stairwell, Lumian and Anthony remained unharmed by the electric storm.

It wasn't because the lightning hadn't spread through the metal floor and walls but because Lumian had taken out the gray-white lightning-shaped brooch Fury of the Sea from his Traveler's Bag and thrown it ahead.

One of its side effects was that it had a high chance of attracting lightning during storms.

This meant that it greatly attracted lightning!

As expected, most of the small electric arcs converged on Fury of the Sea, making it bloom like a bright silver flower.

Thus, Lumian and Anthony only felt a mild tingling, retaining their ability to move.

Looking at the now-closed cabin door, Lumian raised an eyebrow and murmured, "Did Howl Constantine get seriously injured in the last attack and decide to seal the cabin to recover?"

To Lumian, Admiral Deep Sea's response wasn't wrong. If possible, it was indeed one of the best choices under the circumstances, especially since Howl Constantine couldn't gauge the strength of

Lumian, who had been merely watching and not acting, nor did he know the full extent of Franca, Jenna, and Anthony's abilities. If faced with something like a Banshee's terrifying scream, Howl Constantine-having been weakened by a Demoness's black flames-would likely die instantly.
But sealing the cabin to recover was precisely what Lumian and his companions hoped for. They hadn't planned to kill Howl Constantine before the Fate Exchange was complete. This quiet waiting scenario was exactly what they wanted.
"Watch out for secret passages in the cabin. Howl Constantine might escape or jump into the sea," Franca cautioned Lumian as she recovered.
She had rich experience in assassinations.
"I'm keeping an eye on it," Lumian replied concisely, picking up the Fury of the Sea.
He was monitoring the Fate Exchange situation and his own senses and spirituality.
If Admiral Deep Sea showed any signs of fleeing, Lumian would immediately blow open the cabin door.
As long as he didn't directly attack Howl Constantine, the Fate Exchange wouldn't be interrupted!
Franca's hands still trembled slightly, and she exuded a faint burnt smell as she remarked, "Howl Constantine's lightning strikes and Spirit Body and mental protection from items almost ruined all our efforts, along with this unique environment.
"If not for our abundance of mystical items and our good teamwork, we might have been forced to give up the plan and have you join the battle personally.
"What's the phrase? 'An unstoppable force overcomes all obstacles.' No matter what supernatural abilities you use, I'll counter with lightning and turn it into a weaker version of a lightning storm using the environment."
Jenna, who was also trembling and smelled burnt but was in better shape, nodded slightly in agreement.
As the one fighting on the front lines, she deeply understood this.
Outside the Carnival Bar, the pirates and disguised pirates saw the heavy wooden door suddenly swell and shatter.
Boom!
An explosion followed, sending the doorframe and fragments flying.
The figures of Great Shark Jorg and his men finally appeared to the onlookers.
Most of them were injured to varying degrees, their expressions grim, as they sprinted towards the dock without bothering to

disguise themselves.
Seeing this, both real and fake pirates had similar thoughts.
They lost?
Even with all of Admiral Deep Sea's top men, they lost?
Are they running to seek help from Admiral Deep Sea?
They're fleeing in such a sorry state...
As thoughts raced through their minds, the onlookers turned their gaze back to the inside of the Carnival Bar. They saw broken tables and chairs, exploded barrels, and the mingling scents of alcohol and scorch, but no sign of the unknown adventurer.
This left the pirates and impostors bewildered, unsure of what it meant.
In the sealed captain's cabin, now filled with blue seawater, Howl Constantine's cloaked body floated, bubbles constantly rising.
His face, with the translucent octopus, hung slightly down, gazing at the submerged metal floor, feeling his soul being nourished, quickly shaking off his weakened state.
After several seconds, Howl Constantine slowly but steadily raised his head, looking at the closed metal door.
Outside, Lumian turned to Franca and said, "It's almost done. Stand by the door and show your face. If Howl Constantine sees the real face of a Demoness of Pleasure, he might feel extreme pleasure, which will help with the digestion."
"This is so weird..." Franca muttered as she moved to stand opposite the captain's cabin door, leaning against the metal wall.
She pulled down her hood, revealing her radiant and beautiful face.
She wanted to strike a pose but couldn't bring herself to do it under everyone's eyes!
Lumian, calculating the progress, walked to the door of the captain's cabin and placed his hands on the metal.
White-hot flames instantly gathered, compressing layer by layer into the metal door.
Rumble!
The metal door rapidly caved inwards and then exploded.
With a splash, the blue seawater gushed out, momentarily driven back by the explosion's shockwave.
Howl Constantine's figure emerged before Lumian, Franca, and the others, a hopeful smile playing on his lips.
Taking advantage of the respite, he had activated the Newins' defense system. He was ready to fight the four assassins with the help of this alchemical ship.
In that state, he was confident he could hold his own against even a demigod for a while!

This was the main reason he hadn't jumped into the sea when the cabin door closed.
Suddenly, he saw an exceptionally beautiful face and a figure-despite partially covered by leather armor-that radiated allure.
He was momentarily stunned.
At that moment, Howl Constantine's mind buzzed, going blank.
That emptiness was immediately filled with extreme pleasure, which erupted, seemingly shattering his soul and scattering it in all directions.
He froze in place, his blood staining the blue seawater that hadn't yet flowed out of the cabin.
Tears streamed from his eyes, mixing with the seawater.
They were tears of pain and tears of joy.
Silently, the translucent octopus fell from Howl Constantine's face, revealing his true visage.
It was a handsome face, but the features were not deep, rather soft.
Seeing this, Franca's heart suddenly raced.
This face bore a striking resemblance to the man she had encountered in the Trier catacombs, Harrison, who was suspected to be from Resurrection Island.
Not in detailed appearance, but in style.
It was an "Eastern-style" face, but not purely so, more like a mixed heritage!
Stunned, Franca heard an illusory sound of something shattering and felt the complete digestion of the Pleasure potion.
She saw an illusory starry sky filled with twinkling stars.
Lumian was about to kill the severely injured Howl Constantine when he suddenly sensed the environment becoming extremely dangerous. He heard the mechanical sounds of the entire Newins' mechanism activating.
It was like a killing machine awakening.
Lumian didn't hesitate. He reached out, grabbing Franca and Jenna's shoulders, and lifted the Bottle of Fiction.
Anthony stepped forward, grabbing Lumian's clothes.
The four of them quickly disappeared from the corridor outside the captain's cabin.
They teleported back to the motel in Banamo Port.
Soon, the pirates near the dock noticed the Newins retract its masts and sails, sealing itself up and submerging into the sea.
Great Shark Jorg and his men hadn't even reached the dock!
Fleeing?
Admiral Deep Sea just fled?
He didn't even fight the adventurer, just ran, leaving behind his

first mate, second mate, and boatswain?
Various thoughts surged in the minds of the pirates near the dock.

Chapter 787: Magic Mirror Divination's Answers

When Great Shark Jörg and his men arrived at the dock, the spot where the Newins had been moored was now empty, with only the gentle ripples of blue water moving softly in the light fog.

At that moment, Jörg and the other pirates stood frozen, as if they were staring at a surreal painting beyond their imagination.

Soon, a deep panic gripped them.

The Admiral fled on the Newins. *What do we do now?*

If that unknown adventurer couldn't kill the Admiral and let him escape, will he turn his attention to us for revenge?

He used illusions to deal with us; he must have really come to hunt the Admiral...

Their thoughts raced, and Great Shark Jörg and his men turned and ran, fleeing the dock area.

They needed to find the Newins' contacts in Banamo Port, relying on their local knowledge to find a secret place to hide and then contact Admiral Deep Sea to decide their next steps.

...

Inside the captain's cabin of the Newins.

Howl Constantine, having donned his translucent octopus mask again, stared at the nearly lightless, swaying seawater outside the thick glass window, feeling his internal and external wounds gradually healing with the help of medicinal potions.

He couldn't help but recall his recent encounter. Though it was extremely painful, it brought him an unprecedented pleasure, leaving his soul almost completely blank.

The joy it gave him far surpassed that of the women brought to the ship, making him want to experience it again despite his strong will.

Phew... Howl Constantine exhaled, grateful that he had activated the Newins' defense system in time. Otherwise, under the influence of that extreme pleasure, he would have been easily killed in the next second.

He believed the assassins had felt the Newins become extremely dangerous, leading them to retreat and flee the alchemical ship without pursuing him further.

He did not regret not activating the defense system earlier; being caught off guard, he had no time to do so.

What puzzled Howl Constantine now was when the seed of pleasure had been planted in him, causing an explosive reaction upon seeing the true face and figure of that Demoness.

He muttered to himself, *Is that why the male assassin never attacked?*

Not that he didn't want to, but he couldn't, not until the pleasure seed had fully rooted in my soul?
What are their true intentions beyond assassinating me? Are they after the secrets of the Newins and the Lost Newins?
Lacking the necessary clues, Admiral Deep Sea found it hard to make a decisive judgment and could only suppress his emotions for now, planning to contact his subordinates in Banamo Port once his body and soul had fully recovered to check if they had noticed anything unusual.
Instinctively, he reviewed the recent events, trying to find investigative details. But removing the true intentions of the assassins made the whole affair seem like a deliberate setup by two Demonesses and their companions to give him an ultimate pleasure, with the near-death experience being a normal part of it.
In this world, many have died from pleasure without being attacked.
Reflecting on this, Howl Constantine noticed a shiny gold Louis d'or at the cabin door.
It was left by the two Demonesses.
Staring at the water at the doorstep and the gold coin, which had clearly been treated to prevent tracking, Howl Constantine suddenly had a ridiculous thought and fell into an indescribable silence.
...
In the motel room rented by Lumian and company in Banamo Port.
Jenna quickly removed the Scotch Broom-like Decency brooch and submerged it in the aluminum military flask Lumian had given her.
Almost simultaneously, Jenna felt the eyes of Lumian, Franca, and Anthony change significantly.
Their gazes now held undisguised disgust, aversion, and malice.
Jenna had felt malice from some people in the bars and dance halls of Trier's Rue Pasteur, but it was often mixed with desire and longing, unlike the pure hatred and loathing now directed at her.
Of course, Jenna also noticed a certain amount of desire in Franca's disgust and aversion, as if she wanted to satisfy herself by domineering over Jenna.
Lumian, though his expression remained relatively normal, had a change in his eyes, reflecting an Ascetic's endurance.
He nodded at Jenna and said, "The Decency brooch's negative effect has taken hold. Go to the next room for an hour."
"I know." Jenna glanced at Lumian, recalling past events.
Back then, she had been tasked with protecting Lumian under the

negative effect of the Decency brooch, and she had felt the urge to beat him up.
She regretted not taking the chance to draw piles of dogsh*t on his face.
Recalling these memories, Jenna smiled slightly, left the room, and went to wait for the negative effect to wear off in the next room.
"Phew, the Decency brooch's negative effect is really strong..." Franca commented sincerely.
Lumian gave her a sidelong glance and laughed.
"I think your hatred and disgust weren't pure enough."
Franca immediately felt embarrassed, awkwardly smiling as she said, "Sometimes, hatred and disgust can also spark desire. Just ask Anthony!"
Before Lumian could turn to him, Anthony spoke up, "It's true. The human brain and soul are complex. Different people might develop the same desire from different stimuli.
"Some get pleasure from pain, others from jealousy, breaking taboos, being scolded or tortured, or sharing with others, gaining their affection. The possibilities are endless."
"In simple terms, the world is full of perverts?" Lumian mocked Franca.
Franca didn't take the bait, her expression growing serious as she frowned slightly.
Once free from the Decency brooch's negative effect, she recalled the scene she had witnessed earlier.
After some thought, she said, "Do you think Admiral Deep Sea's real appearance resembles Harrison from Resurrection Island?"
Lumian recalled and said, "You mean they both have noticeable Eastern features?"
He had seen Franca's drawing of Harrison.
"Yes, but more like a mix of someone like Harrison and an Intisian or person from the North Continent," Franca said thoughtfully.
Because Anthony was present, she didn't mention the transmigration matter, instead steering towards Resurrection Island.
With a nod, Lumian replied, "Draw Howl Constantine's portrait, and we'll write to the Tarot Club Major Arcana card holders."
"No need to ask Madam Judgment or Madam Magician yet; I'll try with Magic Mirror Divination first," Franca responded immediately.
She began preparing the ritual in the room, sketching Howl Constantine's features from memory. This included an appearance similar to Resurrection Island residents, slightly pointed ears, dark

blue near-black thick hair, and the tentacle-like dark veins on his hands when holding the obsidian trident.
Some details Franca hadn't noticed during the fight were now retrieved from her memory through the ritual.
Lumian examined the portrait for a moment and said, "It does have an Eastern style."
Franca nodded, then busied herself with the Magic Mirror Divination.
Soon, the mirror on the desk turned dark, with faint sounds of water echoing within.
Franca picked up the portrait of Admiral Deep Sea and asked the target of the Magic Mirror Divination, "What does this appearance signify?"
She didn't directly ask about Howl Constantine's origins, fearing it was beyond the Magic Mirror Divination's knowledge.
A hoarse, elderly voice emerged from the mirror: "This is an elf."
An elf? Lumian's temples throbbed.
This was a legendary Beyonder race!
Previously, Lumian had only known of elves as a mythical race from ancient times, living on the Sonia Sea's Sonia Island. He learned they were powerful, with their queen, Soniathrym, being one of the eight ancient gods, ruling the sky and sea.
In the real world, encountering a true elf since the Fifth Epoch was rare, only seeing occasional descendants with diluted bloodlines.
Franca was equally shocked, blurting out, "An elf, or a half-elf mixed with humans?"
"Half-elf," the hoarse voice responded.
Though a half-elf, Howl Constantine's features show a strong elven bloodline... In theory, the Sequence 5 Ocean Songster shouldn't cause such changes... A half-elf? Could the elves be descendants of transmigrators, living and thriving in this world? Elf legends date back to the Second Epoch... Franca thought deeply, almost forgetting to ask the third question.
Gathering her thoughts, she pondered for a few seconds and asked, "Is the Lost Newins an ancient elven relic?"
Though elves supposedly lived on Sonia Island in ancient times, they once ruled the seas, so leaving relics in other seas was plausible.
Yes, if Howl Constantine is a pure-blooded half-elf, it makes sense he wore a mask to disguise as a sea monster. The Church of the Lord of Storms supposedly hates pure-blooded elves...
The elderly voice in the mirror answered Franca's third question, "I don't know."
"Alright..." Franca ended the Magic Mirror Divination and fell into a

long silence.
She suddenly regretted using Admiral Deep Sea Howl Constantine merely to digest the Pleasure potion this time. Instead of training the team and exchanging fate, they should have gotten Lumian to strike fully with their support to see if they could capture the elf alive.

Chapter 788: Realizations

Seeing the Magic Mirror Divination come to an end, Lumian turned his gaze to Anthony.

"The Newins has definitely fled. Go out and gather information from the pirates. Find out if Great Shark Jörg and the key crew members managed to board the ship. If they didn't, find out where they are now."

"Understood." Anthony knew Lumian wanted to quickly determine the whereabouts of Great Shark Jörg and his men to see if they could use them to "visit" the Newins again and learn about the elves and the true nature of the Lost Newins.

Lumian couldn't go himself; the pirates would avoid him, and even if he forced the information out of them, it would alert Great Shark Jörg and his men if they were still in Banamo Port, making them hide deeper.

Disguising himself wouldn't work either; the pirates wouldn't be friendly or forthcoming.

The same applied to Franca.

Only Anthony, who had befriended many pirates, could naturally obtain the needed intel.

After watching Anthony leave the room, Franca sat down at the desk with a sigh and said, "This whole transmigration thing keeps getting more complicated."

"You used to treat it too simply," Lumian scoffed.

Franca didn't argue, staying silent for a moment before changing the subject.

"I've fully digested the Pleasure potion. After a few days of rest, I'll be ready to attempt the Demoness of Affliction ritual."

"Honestly, it feels like a dream. Have I really digested it?"

She still seemed somewhat incredulous.

Lumian chuckled in response.

"What else were you expecting? If Admiral Deep Sea knew our main goal was to help you digest the Pleasure potion, he'd think the world was absurd. He'd wonder if it was necessary and suggest that with a Demoness of Pleasure's conditions, we could have just asked for his help with a notarized agreement to prevent harm, and he'd happily assist."

"It's just hard for me to accept..." Franca muttered. "And I know what you mean. In our world, plenty would say, 'Helping a Demoness of Pleasure digest a potion is too wicked-please let me help,' but that's superficial pleasure and low-quality digestion. Real pleasure comes from experiencing it in pain and sinking into it. Targeting people like Moran Avigny and Howl Constantine aligns

more with the essence of the Demoness path."
Lumian was just joking and didn't continue the topic.
Franca was silent for a while, then looked at Lumian and carefully said, "About your plan to spread a plague among the pirates in Banamo Port -I don't think it's viable."
"Why?" Lumian raised an eyebrow, amused.
Franca straightened, her gaze unwavering.
"I don't think we can completely separate the guilty pirates from innocent bystanders. The plague would inevitably affect the latter, causing them to die in despair."
Lumian chuckled. "It was just a concept, a direction. We can refine the plan to address those concerns, and if it's not feasible, we can abandon it. We can't limit our thinking right from the start.
"For example, by then, I might be a demigod and find a high-level replacement for the Bottle of Fiction, capable of containing all of Banamo Port with conditions allowing only pirates to enter or exit."
"No," Franca shook her head. "There are adventurers who moonlight as pirates, and many of them haven't committed crimes deserving death."
Lumian smiled and sighed.
"Then we'll collaborate with the Aurora Order or find a Sequence 5 artifact from the Broker path to identify guilty targets."
Franca seriously thought for a moment.
"That won't work either. We have our own crimes. Many adventurers have killed pirates. Does that count as guilty?"
Lumian was momentarily speechless, then laughed.
"You really are suited for switching to Provoker.
"I was just raising examples; my point being that a plan shouldn't be dismissed outright. We need to analyze its feasibility and consider future changes."
"Okay." Franca expressed her opinion and sighed quietly.
After some thought, she decided to speak frankly to Lumian, "Since discovering the vortex plan, you've become more aggressive, like when you first came to Trier. Or is it the Devil's Whispers from Hisoka that's constantly stirring your malice? The Traveler's Bag only mitigates its influence; it doesn't completely eliminate the negative effects."
Lumian chuckled, somewhat self-deprecatingly. "It's a bit of both."
He then grew serious.
"But more importantly, I've come to some realizations."
"What realizations?" Franca asked, puzzled.
Lumian nodded. "I was going to remind you anyway. You've been a Demoness for a long time. Haven't you noticed the inherent nature

of this pathway?"
Franca fell silent.
Lumian continued in a low voice. "Like the Hunter pathway, it inevitably brings catastrophe and calamity. We are destined to belong to darkness and represent destruction.
"Think about it. What's the general perception of Hunters and Demonesses among Beyonders? Danger. Hunters are seen as bloody dangers, and Demonesses as evil dangers. We can't escape this impression, nor can we deny it.
"The subsequent potion digestion and advancement rituals will push us deeper into darkness unless you choose to stop advancing and remain where you are. Otherwise, we'll face challenges that test our very souls.
"You could consider switching paths, but your only option would be the Hunter pathway."
Seeing Franca's expression change but still remaining silent, Lumian suddenly laughed.
"What I'm trying to say is, give up on purity; don't shy away from darkness and evil. We need to confront these things. Only then can we find ways to avoid evil and discover the light within the darkness. We will all be tainted by darkness.
"We are stained black; we must strive not to fall, not to betray our inner principles."
Franca was silent for a while before sighing deeply.
"Affliction and Despair give me bad premonitions. But walking in darkness, seeking light within it-won't we be corrupted bit by bit and eventually fall completely?"
Lumian chuckled. "Do we have any other choice? We can only keep fighting our own darkness and evil until we die."
Franca tersely acknowledged his words and expressed her thoughts, "Actually, all Beyonders are like this. The paths of gods are inherently dangerous and inevitably lead to madness. Hunters and Demonesses just make it more obvious and direct."
She couldn't imagine the struggles and pain if she had chosen the Devil pathway.
When the negative effects of Jenna's Decency brooch wore off, Anthony returned and briefed Lumian and the others on the current situation in Banamo Port.
The Newins had indeed fled, and Great Shark Jörg and his men hadn't boarded and were now missing.
In the following two days, Lumian and his team disguised themselves and searched Banamo Port for the first mate, second mate, and boatswain of the Newins. However, they found no significant leads, whether through social investigation or mystical

tracking. Instead, they discovered some suspected associates of Admiral Deep Sea had also disappeared.
Lumian suspected Great Shark Jörg and his men had left Banamo Port through some secret means. Whether they returned to the Newins remained unknown.
...
In Trier, in an apartment in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.
Angoulême de Francois set up a ritual and summoned the messenger of the Seven of Cups.
He saw a rabbit-shaped Spirit Body emerge from the flames, dressed in an odd manner: a miniature silk top hat between its ears, tiny gold-rimmed glasses on its nose, a black trench coat clearly not meant for a rabbit, and holding an iron-black revolver sized for a large rabbit.
The messenger of Hidden Blade is quite cute, with a unique style... Who knew she would dress her messenger like this... Angoulême picked up the prewritten letter and handed it to the adorably dressed rabbit messenger.
The rabbit gave him a cold, sharp glance.
Um... Angoulême retracted his previous thoughts.
...
In one of the motel rooms rented by Lumian and company in Banamo Harbor, Franca read Angoulême's letter and said with some difficulty, "007 has a lead on the Mirror People and wants us to follow up, but we still haven't found Great Shark Jörg."
She was more interested in the secrets of the elves than the Mirror People.
Lumian leaned back, relaxed, and said, "The worst-case scenario is that Great Shark Jörg and his men have already returned to the Newins through secret means. We won't get any results staying here.
"So, let's leave. Once the alert is lifted, those people might come out.
Meanwhile, we can make long-term plans to keep an eye on Banamo Port. Maybe the Newins will return for supplies."
"Agreed," Franca accepted reality.
At that moment, Jenna noticed a problem: Rabbit Chasel was still in the room.
She hadn't paid it for delivering the message.

Chapter 789: At the Stake

Jenna observed Rabbit Chasel, who increasingly resembled Gehrman Sparrow, and carefully asked, "What do you need this time?"

One of the later volumes of The Great Adventurer? Or something else?

Luckily, few people knew about her messenger, and Rabbit Chasel didn't deliver messages frequently. Otherwise, Jenna would have to consider providing different knowledge.

Rabbit Chasel lowered its paw holding the revolver and said in a thoughtful tone, "Get me a pair of boxing gloves that a rabbit can wear."

What kind of request is that? Lumian said with a chuckle, "I don't remember Gehrman Sparrow ever wearing boxing gloves."

This imitation doesn't quite fit the persona!

"True, but Gehrman Sparrow has Blazing Danitz. I need my own Danitz. I want to develop one in our community," Rabbit Chasel explained earnestly. "Danitz uses boxing gloves."

For a moment, Franca, Jenna, and Lumian didn't know how to respond.

After several seconds, Jenna nodded and said, "I'll have a pair custom-made for you. Mm, normal Rabbit of Knowledge size, not your size?"

"That's right." Rabbit Chasel raised its right hand, blew on the small revolver's muzzle, satisfied.

But... this gesture isn't fitting for the current scene... Franca noticed that Rabbit Chasel was still an immature Rabbit of Knowledge, mimicking and repeating much without truly mastering it.

...

In the darkness of Banamo Port, only a few street lamps with candles flickered. Pirates gathered in bars, drinking heavily or going upstairs with women, enjoying pleasures unavailable at sea.

With the Newins gone and the unknown adventurer disappeared, the pirates gradually put the incident behind them. After all, everyone felt embarrassed; no one would ridicule another.

As pirates, they knew they might die in a storm, during a robbery, or in a mutiny on their next voyage. Dwelling on past problems was meaningless; indulging in the present was the only option.

Of course, they also talked about the unknown adventurer's strength and what had happened inside the Newins, wondering why Admiral Deep Sea fled in such a hurry.

"I think that adventurer was waiting for Admiral Deep Sea!"

"Does he want to recreate Gehrman Sparrow's great feats?"
"Pui! Son of a bitch. What great feats? We're pirates!"
"He succeeded but didn't completely succeed? He defeated Admiral Deep Sea but let him escape?"
"Is he close to the power of the Kings?"
"What's happening on the sea? Every so often, a powerful adventurer appears! There was that Louis Berry before, too."
"..."
Disguised as a non-pirate, Mason mingled in several bars, listening to the pirates discuss recent events, hoping they'd start a fight.
On his way to the next bar, Mason turned into a quieter alley and saw a figure standing ahead, seemingly waiting for him.
The figure had black hair and blue eyes, with sharp features and a handsome face. It was the same unknown adventurer who had challenged all the pirates in Banamo Port and forced Admiral Deep Sea to flee.
Mason suddenly heard his heart pounding and blurted out, "I'm not a pirate!"
Lumian strolled forward and smiled. "I have a task for you."
Hearing this, Mason relaxed a bit and carefully said, "What can I do for you? I'm not sure if my abilities can meet your needs."
He feared that while completing the task might be easy, the aftermath could be problematic-pirates might hack him to pieces once the adventurer left.
Lumian said bluntly, "It's a simple and secret task. Keep an eye on Banamo Port. As soon as the Newins returns or you spot Great Shark Jörg and his men, summon my messenger immediately."
Hearing "messenger," Mason was suddenly struck by a thought.
He remembered his last task: summoning a terrifying messenger through a ritual!
Unable to control his expression, Mason asked in slight terror, "Are you Lumian Lee, sir?"
The master of that terrifying messenger?
"Perceptive," Lumian replied, not too sincerely.
Mason connected the recent events in his mind: Was the reaI purpose of that task to bring Lumian Lee to Banamo Port?
And Lumian Lee's goal was to deal with Admiral Deep Sea, Howl Constantine, for the Lost Newins?
My spiritual intuition was partly correct; the ritual indeed brought something bad to Banamo Port, though it didn't turn into a catastrophe...
Lumian continued, "The payment is 5000 verl d'or."
The task is indeed simple, and I likely wouldn't be discovered by

the pirates. The reward is generous... If I refused, knowing the task details might bring trouble... After weighing it for over ten seconds, Mason said, "No problem, I think I can handle this task."
Lumian nodded slightly, paid a 1000-verl d'or deposit, and turned to leave the quiet alley.
Watching Lumian's figure disappear into the darkness, Mason silently repeated his name, "Lumian Lee, Lumian Lee..."
Mason finally remembered where he had heard the name: on a wanted poster aboard a ship!
The poster described Lumian Lee as a survivor of a sacrificial ritual to an evil god that destroyed a village, severely corrupted by the evil god.
...
In Trier, in the prison district, at the Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground.
Returning to Trier for two days, Franca, feeling ready for the Demoness of Affliction advancement ritual, decided to proceed.
007's lead on the Mirror People came from an ore scholar of the Trier Cave Association. The Purifiers had planned to investigate all the association's ore scholars, but one had mysteriously disappeared before they could visit. Recently, someone had seen her in Underground Trier, suspected to be Palia, a Mirror Person.
Franca looked at the stake and sighed sincerely, "When I became a witch, I wondered if I'd end up burned at the stake. Who knew, I have to tie myself up here."
As she spoke, she took out the brown-red wooden suitcase given by Demoness of Black Clarice from the Traveler's Bag and unlocked the metal clasp.
Next, she retrieved a red wine glass, crushed the crystalline ice containing potion ingredients, and poured in Flower-Faced Bat blood and human blood from a seriously ill person. Both were dark red, and when combined, they turned almost black.
She then added the Flower-Faced Bat's head, a Two-Tailed Black Snake's gallbladder and tail tip, and ten drops of Enfinitas Eucalyptus essential oil.
As the ingredients were added, the dark red blood in the glass turned pitch black, with occasional nauseating green bubbles.
"It's like a cup of untreated sewage," Lumian commented honestly.
"Dammit! Shut up!" Franca grew more disgusted as she looked at the Demoness of Affliction potion.
She handed the potion to Lumian and lightly jumped onto the stake, tying herself up with Jenna's help.
During this, Franca muttered, "Damn, this feels so weird..."
She adjusted her mindset for several seconds and nodded to

Lumian, "I'm ready."
Lumian handed the potion to Jenna and extended his right palm.
A ball of crimson-white flames flew out, landing on Franca, who immediately felt pain. Her body instinctively wanted to dodge and contract, but the ropes held her firmly.
Jenna quickly jumped to her side, one hand holding the ropes and the other bringing the potion to her mouth.
Franca forced herself to gulp down the pathogen-like dark-green potion.
Whether from the flames or the potion, her head quickly grew hot, and her mind became fuzzy from the heat.
She involuntarily recalled past pleasures, including her own experiences and the feedback from her partners.
At that moment, Franca was both the giver and receiver of pleasure, drowning in it from body to soul, almost dissolving like spring water.
Her thoughts drifted, her will sank, and her self was lost in various intense pleasures.
However, the pain accompanying those pleasures kept her slightly conscious. It was the mental resistance and spiritual conflict with Gardner Martin, the emotional gap with Jenna, as if they could never truly unite body and soul...
The extreme pain from the burning flames on her body was like invisible threads pulling her self and consciousness, making her sway like a kite in a storm, not completely out of control.
Swaying, Franca instinctively cursed in her mind:
Damn, it hurts so much!
This ritual is trying to kill me, isn't it?
Cough, cough, hot smoke in my throat and lungs, so uncomfortable. Am I dying...
Dammit, I can say I smell good now, like food, the scent of roasted meat...
Lumian, Jenna, and Anthony stood before the stake, watching Franca's body gradually turn black and her expression twist beyond beauty.
Even Lugano, ready to provide medical help, felt a bit heated, their minds wandering with certain thoughts and urges.
Facing this horrifying scene, they had inappropriate desires.
Fortunately, it wasn't severe and was bearable.
After several more seconds, the crimson flames on Franca's body turned pitch black, then into crystalline ice shards, falling off in pieces.
The shards took the charred skin with them, revealing Franca's new, tender, and glistening skin underneath.

Even with his Ascetic's endurance, Lumian instinctively looked away.

Chapter 790: Charm

Not only did Lumian avoid looking at Franca, but Jenna and Anthony also instinctively turned their heads, as if evading a temptation that could pierce their hearts.

"Dammit, my clothes almost got burned up!

"Just one step away from running around naked!

"Thankfully, thankfully..."

Franca's cursing reached Lumian and the others' ears, bringing a sense of familiarity and dispelling the earlier temptations.

Franca then disappeared from sight, took out a set of clothes from the Traveler's Bag, and changed in a nearby secluded corner.

She then deactivated her invisibility, tied up her ponytail, and walked back to Lumian and the others.

"The beautifying effect is really impressive..." Franca took out a mirror, examined herself, and poked her cheek as if testing her skin's elasticity and smoothness.

Lumian chuckled and said, "Is that the only change the Affliction potion brought?"

Franca was about to speak when she suddenly remembered something and glanced at Lugano.

Lugano immediately said, "I need to go back and prepare dinner for Ludwig."

"Okay." Lumian nodded.

After Lugano left, Franca felt the changes in her body and spoke slowly, "Enhancing appearance, figure, and charm is just one aspect, and it's the least important. No, it's not unimportant, but it has little to do with becoming stronger. No, I remember someone saying beauty is part of a woman's power, just like handsomeness is part of a man's. Anyway, you get the idea. The other changes include Charm becoming an active ability instead of a passive state."

As a Beyonder in the Demoness pathway, Jenna easily understood Franca's meaning.

"Before, you showcased your appearance, figure, and aura, naturally enchanting anyone who saw you. Now, a glance, a gesture, a word can completely charm someone?"

"Yes," Franca said with a smile, "But combined with showcasing my appearance, figure, and aura, the active Charm ability will be more effective. Charmed enemies will hesitate to harm us, unable to use their full strength. Some might even give up resisting just to get closer to us.

In daily interactions, if Charm is used repeatedly on someone, they will truly fall in love with us over time."

Franca glanced at Lumian, her eyes twinkling.
She wanted to test the effect of Charm and see how it compared to the endurance of an Ascetic.
Lumian suddenly felt Franca's lake-blue eyes deepen, as if hiding countless words, and her fair, smooth skin seemed delicate enough to break with a touch.
An indescribable feeling surged within Lumian, causing him to curse aloud, "Dammit! Stop experimenting with your abilities here!"
Charm works well if it can make an Ascetic curse... Franca thought to herself, then said seriously, "It's just that I've just advanced, and the potion's power is leaking out, making it hard to control."
"Do you think I'll believe that?" Lumian retorted, realizing he felt unusually agitated.
For a Provoker, staying calm while provoking others was crucial.
Franca withdrew her gaze and continued explaining the Affliction potion's abilities, "The core ability is Plague. It can create various pathogens within a 30-meter range. Once I get used to the Affliction potion and truly master its power, this range can expand beyond 40 meters and eventually to 50 meters as the potion is digested.
"A Demoness of Affliction can create multiple pathogens, accelerating their infection and the onset of diseases. The initial ten seconds are the incubation period, followed by mild symptoms like allergies, fever, cough, and sneezing. The symptoms quickly worsen, leading to severe illnesses like pneumonia. In two to three minutes, the disease will become critical, potentially causing sudden death or incapacitation."
Done with explaining Plague, Franca excitedly envisioned, "This pairs well with an Assassin.
"Stealthily get within a few dozen meters of the target, silently spread pathogens to cover the area. When the target shows mild symptoms and realizes something is wrong, strike as their strength decreases, their state affected, and many abilities disrupted. If the first strike fails, reposition and keep trying, dragging the target into severe illness.
"Plague should be something a Guardian's abilities can't defend against.
Their invisible barriers don't seem to block air. The people they protect can still breathe normally. I'm not sure if the barriers have a sterilizing function..."
"Heh heh, next time I face Admiral Deep Sea, I won't worry about his octopus mask. It seems to only protect the spirit and mind, maybe also making the body tougher and more resilient."

"It's indeed well-suited for assassination and prolonged fights," Lumian evaluated from a Hunter's perspective.
He pondered and asked, "Does the infection and onset time of Plague vary based on the target's constitution? Can the pathogens you create be burned by a Hunter's flames?"
He was recalling his battle with a bestowed from the Order of All Extinction.
"Of course, there's a difference. Undead creatures won't be infected unless I become a Demoness of Despair," Franca said introspectively. "I'm not sure if the pathogens can be burned by a Hunter's flames. Want to test it?"
"Sure." Lumian also wanted to confirm.
This could be useful if he ever faced a Demoness of Affliction.
Jenna and Anthony immediately distanced themselves, moving to the edge of the Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground.
In the early winter night, Lumian's body suddenly ignited with brilliant white flames, spreading around and burning the air within a seven-to-eight-meter radius.
Franca stood over ten meters away, her lake-blue eyes deepening.
As the flames crackled, time passed, and Lumian gradually felt a discomfort in his throat, as if swallowing a foreign object, making him want to cough it out. His nose also felt sore and itchy.
Franca stopped the experiment and concluded, "Hunter's flames can indeed kill many pathogens created by a Demoness of Affliction, reducing the disease's impact. It took me about a minute to give you mild symptoms."
Lumian sneezed, coughed twice, and the white flames quickly dissipated.
When Jenna and Anthony returned, Franca continued, "A Demoness's webs have also been significantly enhanced. As a Demoness of Pleasure, I could only roughly control them to entangle and bind targets. Now, they're like extensions of my arms, capable of more precise actions, like..."
Franca suddenly smiled.
"Tickling you!"
As she spoke, Lumian and Jenna felt something soft and invisible tickling their waists, causing a tingling sensation.
"Immature, haven't you grown up?" Lumian mocked, then added, "But it's useful in combat."
Franca withdrew the invisible webs, untied her ponytail, and let her hair fall.
Her flaxen-colored hair didn't drop but floated, each strand distinct and lively.
"Now, my hair is also a weapon," Franca proudly announced, "It

can pierce skin, inject black flames, and cause stiffness in the contacted area, effective in close combat."
She let her hair down, tied it again, and took out a mirror.
"My curses are also stronger and more targeted. Before, I had to reflect the target's full image in a mirror to curse them with black flames. Now, I can reflect just a part of the body, affecting the corresponding area.
"My other abilities have also been enhanced, including black magic and mirror magic."
Jenna listened quietly and sincerely remarked, "Compared to a Demoness of Pleasure, this is a significant improvement."
"After all, it's Sequence 5," Franca said, feeling extremely pleased.
Seeing this, Lumian nodded slightly. "I won't be participating in the Mirror People investigation for now. I plan to leave for Lenburg tomorrow."
To find the City of Exiles, Morora!
He had been studying the Lenburg language and discovered it was essentially the same as the Feynapotter Kingdom's Highlander, with some dialectal differences-Lenburg split from Feynapotter after the Battle of the Violated Oath in the Fifth Epoch.
So, having learned Highlander, Lumian quickly mastered the Lenburg language in a few days.
"So soon? Well, you've digested the Reaper potion and need to consider advancing to demigod." Franca suddenly felt wistful.
Lumian glanced outside the Rois Comprehensive Execution Ground and said to Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, "Take care of Ludwig for me and keep an eye on Lugano."
Based on the information from 0-01 and Madam Magician's hints, it was best for Lumian to go to Morora alone.
Initially, he considered taking Ludwig, his godson, but given his angelic nature and divinity, he might cause unnecessary changes in Morora. So, he abandoned the idea.
In comparison, Termiboros, sealed by Mr. Fool, could be temporarily ignored. Theoretically, He wouldn't trigger 0-01.
"Okay," Franca and the others responded to Lumian.

Chapter 791: Capture

After dinner, Franca and Jenna returned to 9 Rue Orosai's Apartment 702.

"Finally, it worked." Franca raised her hands and stretched lazily. "Next, should we find Palia the Mirror Person first, report to the Demoness of Black, or tell her tomorrow morning that I've become a Demoness of Affliction? She said that once I advanced to Affliction, she would share some secrets of the Demoness Sect with me."

Franca was curious but also a bit fearful about knowing these secrets.

Additionally, she felt that her progress in digesting the Pleasure potion was much faster than expected, which might arouse the Demoness of Pleasure's suspicion. She didn't want to report anything related to Admiral Deep Sea yet.

This involved the secret of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society's transmigration!

So far, Franca and Lumian had only mentioned Admiral Deep Sea's suspected connection to elves to their respective Arcana cards and had yet to receive any response.

Jenna thought for a moment and then said, "Even if you don't go to the Demoness of Black tomorrow, you should do it soon. The sooner we understand the Demoness Sect's secrets, the better we can plan our actions and avoid potential pitfalls."

Understanding Franca's concerns, she added with a smile, "Just tell the Demoness of Black that Lumian has become a Reaper and he helped you digest the Pleasure potion."

"Uh..." Franca was taken aback. "That's true, but the way you put it doesn't feel right..."

"That's exactly the kind of misunderstanding we need," Jenna replied with a soft smile.

She glanced out at the night sky and said, "Finding Palia should be enough with just you and Anthony. I want to visit Julien in Port LeSeur in the next few days. We haven't seen each other for almost two months, and I want to gauge his intentions, see if he really plans to return to Trier."

"Sure." Franca understood Jenna's concerns.

Jenna nodded. "I'll go home tonight, pack some things for him, and try to leave tomorrow morning. The sooner I go, the sooner I can come back."

There were plenty of steam locomotives and riverboats heading to Port LeSeur, so she didn't worry about not getting a ticket on the spot.

After a brief conversation, Jenna packed her luggage, took her suitcase, and left the apartment.
She hadn't followed Julien's instructions to cancel the lease on the Rue Pasteur apartment while he was away for his exchange program in Port LeSeur, saving money. She still occasionally stayed there, as if she had never left.
Watching Jenna leave, Franca felt a pang of disappointment and muttered, "I was hoping we could celebrate tonight..."
She walked slowly back to her bedroom and saw that some of Jenna's clothes and belongings had been taken away.
As she looked at the now tidier and cleaner bedroom, Franca seemed to understand something.
She fell silent.
She felt that the Affliction potion had been somewhat digested.
...
Chug, chug, chug.
A cream-colored steam train with brass patterns sped along the tracks, heading towards the capital of Lenburg, Azshara, nestled among the mountains.
Lumian sat in a second-class carriage, looking around leisurely.
Without coordinates for Azshara and unwilling to go through the messenger hassle again, he chose to teleport back to the Riston Province, take a steam train to the border, and then smuggle himself across the mountains.
With pre-exchanged Lenburg currency, knowledge of black market traders, and intermediaries, Lumian easily obtained new identification and bought a ticket to Azshara.
Lenburg was a small country, so he would reach his destination by the evening.
As Lumian observed, he noticed that Lenburg residents favored light-colored clothes and brass accessories, each carrying a book to read quietly during the journey. Even those who conversed did so in hushed tones.
At stops, passengers were eager to help elderly people or those dressed as scholars, showing heartfelt respect.
No wonder this is the land of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, Lumian silently mused.
Lenburg was a nation of single faith without a royal family, where the Church of Knowledge exerted strong control and influence over the country.
Perhaps sensing his gaze, the young man next to him, holding a book, glanced at Lumian's "Lenburg Travel Guide" and asked with a low laugh, "Are you a foreigner?"
He spoke in Lenburg, then switched to Highlander, Loenese,

Intisian, and Feysac.
Lumian was a bit surprised.
A typical Lenburg second-class passenger knew so many languages?
Moreover, it felt like the man was showing off.
"Yes, I'm from Intis, and I speak Lenburg," Lumian replied cooperatively.
"What's your name? It's impressive you know all the North Continent languages."
The young man adjusted his light-framed glasses and smiled. "My name is Sallent, and I'm just a small company employee.
"Actually, once you learn one language from the North Continent, the others are easy. If you start with ancient Feysac, it's even simpler. We Lenburgers begin learning ancient Feysac in our compulsory education."
Sallent's tone carried a hint of pride, almost looking down on other countries still plagued by illiteracy and people who didn't know foreign languages.
In theory, yes, otherwise, I wouldn't have mastered Highlander so quickly. My Dutanese is just barely passable... Lumian didn't mind Sallent's slight arrogance.
The Lenburgers he met this morning all had a similar attitude.
Keeping his voice low, Lumian said with a smile, "You're quite civilized, showing great respect for the elderly and scholars, and reading on the train instead of chatting or playing."
Sallent replied with restrained pride, "In Lenburg, knowledge is the most precious, and scholars have more knowledge. Elders, throughout their lives, accumulate a lot of experiential knowledge."
Sallent let out a self-deprecating laugh. "Reading is a habit from childhood and a necessity. You wouldn't know that our lives are filled with exams and evaluations-in school, in companies, and even in church, where we take theological tests during grand masses to show our piety and respect for the God of Knowledge."
Lumian suddenly felt this wasn't necessarily a good thing.
No wonder Ludwig is reluctant to return to the Church of Knowledge...
But Aurore would love it here. She wouldn't want to live here herself, but she'd certainly want to send me here to study...
Seeing the foreigner beside him fall silent, Sallent sighed and said, "That's why I didn't stay in Azshara after graduating. The pressure is overwhelming-qualification exams, annual competency reviews, monthly company evaluations, job training exams, and so on."

Lumian couldn't help but hiss internally.
So this is the daily life of Lenburgers, especially those in Azshara? Ludwig's vague descriptions didn't prepare me for this. I thought only students had it hard...
Thank goodness Aurore took me in and not some Lenburger...
Talking about this made Sallent feel melancholic, prompting him to lower his head and return to his book.
Judging by the time, Lumian realized they were close to Azshara, so he started pondering the issue of the City of Exiles, Morora.
He hesitated and then asked Sallent, "Have you heard of a city called Morora?"
Sallent thought carefully and then replied, "No, neither in reality nor in any legends."
Lumian gave a noncommittal grunt and turned his gaze back to the quickly receding mountain scenery outside, as if their conversation was just casual small talk.
If Madam Magician couldn't find it, I probably can't either, unless I kidnap a demigod of the Church of Knowledge...
Since the Church of Knowledge placed parts of the Abscessed Hand in Morora, can I use the connection between the body parts to find the city?
The Church of Knowledge expects and allows me to go to Morora, perhaps even hoping for it. *Will they give me a hint?*
...
With these thoughts, Lumian grew more determined.
As dusk fell, the steam locomotive stopped at a platform paved with gray and white stone slabs.
Lumian, carrying a small suitcase, walked with Sallent through the station decorated with book sculptures and brass patterns.
The wind howled through the mountains, bringing cold but refreshing air.
As they approached the entrance of Azshara Steam Train Station, Lumian saw several clergy members from the Church of Knowledge in white robes trimmed with brass blocking the way, checking the documents of passengers.
"What's going on?" Lumian asked.
Sallent glanced over and casually replied, "Routine exit checks, done alternately by the Church and the government."
"I thought they might randomly stop people to test their knowledge," Lumian joked.
Sallent turned his head sharply, eyes filled with fear, as if to say: Are you a devil? Even the Church bishops wouldn't think of that!
Lumian shrugged and stepped forward to have his documents checked by the clergy.

The elder leading the group scrutinized Lumian, glanced at his documents, then signaled to the others.
Lumian was quickly surrounded by the clergy, all poised for action.
The elder stared at him and said sternly, "We've found a wanted criminal. Take him away!"
Uh... Lumian raised an eyebrow.
In a split second, he decided not to resist, extending his hands to let the clergy cuff him with silver handcuffs.

Chapter 792: Judgment

Inside the slow-moving carriage, Lumian, handcuffed and shackled, stared at the window with iron bars welded and covered with thick cloth.

His belief in his own judgment grew stronger.

When the clergy from the Church of Knowledge accused him of being a wanted criminal, his first reaction wasn't to be on guard but to feel a wave of confusion.

He sensed that those performing the routine exit check were there specifically for him. But apart from Ludwig and the 0-01 incident, he had no interaction with the Church of Knowledge and hadn't harmed their interests.

Why are you Lenburgers so enthusiastic about catching an Intisian criminal? Did you even verify the details and the target's current abilities?

As thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian, noticing Sallent's surprised, fearful yet relieved gaze, thought of a possibility, *Is this the hint from the Church of Knowledge?*

No, this isn't just a hint. They're directly escorting me to the destination!

The City of Exiles, as the name suggests, is a place for exiling criminals.

When I'm arrested as a wanted criminal and sentenced to exile, I'll naturally be sent to Morora...

Isn't this method a bit too straightforward?

How did they know I was coming? Although I didn't disguise myself, I kept a low profile the entire way...

Are High-Sequence Beyonders of the Reader pathway adept at prophecy or divination?

Lumian glanced at his waist, looking at the Traveler's Bag that hadn't been confiscated. He couldn't help but silently grumble, They didn't confiscate a wanted criminal's belongings or take measures against potential dangerous criminals to restrict the use of Beyonder powers...

This performance is too unconvincing. Are they afraid I won't notice and might resist, causing losses?

Lumian silently took the Traveler's Bag from his belt and tucked it into the inner pocket of his thick jacket.

He didn't want to make things difficult for the clergy of the Church of Knowledge.

Their poor acting doesn't matter, but I can't be equally patronizing. What if other serious offenders, nearby Azshara citizens, or assisting police officers see the Traveler's Bag?

They'd think the clergy of the Church of Knowledge are unprofessional!
After driving for a while, the vehicle finally stopped.
Under the strict guard of several clergy members in white robes trimmed with brass, Lumian was escorted to a massive white tower.
Before he could take a good look at the tower's full appearance or even see its spire to confirm its grandeur, he was "pushed" through a side door, down a stone staircase, through a dim corridor lit by several gas wall lamps, and into a cell made of black iron.
Lumian glanced around and saw about eight people already inside, all handcuffed and shackled. Some were even chained through their collarbones, fixed in place.
Such restraints would be effective even against Beyonders, but they couldn't suppress those with more mystical abilities... If it were me, being locked up like this would render my Hunter combat skills useless, but it wouldn't stop me from starting fires, provoking, scouting for weaknesses, swapping fates, or teleporting to escape. Come on, can't you be more professional? This performance is too fake... Lumian thought as he watched the elder who had arrested him open the iron cell door.
The slightly aged clergyman stepped aside and said to Lumian, "Stay here and await your judgment."
Judgment? You haven't even done the judgment yet? Have you given up on pretending? Lumian cooperatively shuffled into the cell.
Clang! The iron cell door was closed and locked.
Lumian looked around, found a metal chair fixed to the ground, and sat down, casting his gaze at the serious offenders who were sizing him up.
A young man with glasses, sitting opposite him, raised his chin and said, "Didn't expect someone younger than me to arrive. Brother, what crime did you commit?"
Without answering, Lumian asked in return, "What about you?"
The young man with glasses smiled and said, "Murder. Most people here are murderers."
"How many did you kill?" a middle-aged man with a sturdy build and chains through his collarbones asked curiously.
"Seven or eight. I'm not sure if one of them died in the end," the young man replied with a reminiscent look. "Ending a human life with my own hands, feeling their pain, struggle, and despair, having their warm blood splatter on my face, is intoxicating. At that moment, I felt like their god, their lord."
A Serial Killer? Lumian silently watched, not interrupting the

exchange among these serious offenders.
The young man sighed in the end.
"Unfortunately, Azshara has too many detectives. They eventually found me. What about you? How many did you kill, and why?" he asked the middle-aged man with chained collarbones.
The man replied indifferently, as if describing his breakfast, "Don't know. Too many. Do you keep count of how many slices of bread you eat in a month?"
"That's a quote from Emperor Roselle of Intis, right? I read it in a biography," the young man replied with a smile. "I remember eating 123 slices last month."
The middle-aged man was silent for a few seconds and then said, "I kill because they deserve to die. And the more deserving they are, the tastier their flesh."
"You eat the people you kill?" the young man's expression changed slightly.
"Depending on how much they deserve it, there are different cooking methods," the middle-aged man replied seriously.
"You two are both freaks," a sullen man in his thirties snorted.
The young man didn't get angry and asked curiously, "Why did you kill?"
"I didn't kill for the sake of killing. I just wanted to rape them. Blame them on resisting too much," the sullen man answered with a look of disdain, as if saying he was different from these perverts.
The young man laughed and pointed to a woman with disheveled brown hair and collarbone chains, "She also rapes and kills, but that's incidental.
Her main purpose is collecting reproductive organs."
Sitting quietly on a metal chair, slightly leaning forward, Lumian couldn't help but shake his head.
Does Lenburg have too many murderers? On average, each has a few body counts...
The gentlemanly young man looked at Lumian again.
"What about you? What major crime did you commit?"
Lumian thought seriously for a moment and said, "Murder, blasphemy, arson, kidnapping, extortion, intimidation, deceit, causing explosions, inducing miscarriages, worshiping evil gods, attacking government officials, blackmailing the orthodox Churches..."
The young man was stunned for a few seconds and then laughed.
"Brother, haven't you committed too many crimes?"
"Why else would I be here?" Lumian replied casually.
"True." The young man and the other serious offenders looked at

Lumian with more respect.
"How many did you kill exactly?" the young man asked, as if he could immerse himself in the details.
Lumian shook his head and said in a low voice, "I didn't count and don't want to answer. It's not something to boast about. It's like a farmer culling wheat-I'm just doing my job. Would you be happy doing your daily job well?"
The young man was silent for a moment and then said, "What's your name? I'm Guei. Maybe we'll meet again in the land of Death."
Lumian simply replied, "Louis."
He didn't want to use his real name among these people or in the City of Exiles. In mysticism, knowing someone's real name could lead to curses.
The Inevitability pathway had similar contract abilities.
"What about you guys?" Guei asked the others.
"Lez," the middle-aged man replied.
The sullen man hesitated but answered, "Vijepan."
"Julie," said the woman with disheveled brown hair, her gaze lingering greedily on Guei and the others' crotches.
After the serious offenders introduced themselves, Lumian smiled and said, "I didn't expect Lenburg's security to be so bad, with so many serial killers. Right, I'm from Intis. I haven't been in Lenburg long."
Guei, the most talkative, raised his handcuffed hands, adjusted his glasses, and said with a smile, "Actually, it's not bad, even quite good, because Lenburg has the most and best detectives in the world.
"But there are still many people like us-twisted personalities combined with a lot of knowledge easily create a batch of formidable criminals.
"And criminals from other countries come here, wanting to challenge Lenburg's detectives."
Detectives are Sequence 7 of the Reader pathway, which belongs to the Church of Knowledge. There are indeed many here... Could there be real Criminals and Serial Killers among these criminals, using the Detectives for their own role-play? But then again, if the detectives catch the Devil pathway criminals, they can better and faster digest their own potions...
Lumian thought, nodding slightly and replying with a smile, "Am I one of them?
"You have a clear understanding of your own personality. The more knowledge you have, the more dangerous you become."
Guei coughed and said, "Yes, I now regret not having more knowledge."

As the serious offenders alternated between silence and idle chatter, time seemed to pass without notice.
Finally, the clergy from before escorted a woman to the cell.
She wore a shirt with white lace flowers at the collar, a beige coat with brass trim, a dark knee-length skirt, and brown boots. Her face was oval, her light blue eyes like spring water, her nose high and straight, and her brown hair simply tied back with a bun-a very beautiful woman.
Seeing her, Vijepan's eyes lit up.
"You have been judged, and I will announce the verdict." The beautiful woman said before turning and walking toward the end of the dim corridor. The other clergy opened the cell and escorted Lumian, Guei, and the others behind her.
They descended stone stairs, going deeper and deeper underground, until they reached a large, double brass door.
The beautiful woman with the oval face stopped and turned to face Lumian and the others, her expression serious.
"Your verdict is:
"Exile, never to return!"
"Exile to where?" Guei asked, both surprised and confused.
Not a death sentence?
The woman pointed to the brass double doors behind her.
"Exile beyond these doors."
As soon as she finished speaking, a chilling, indistinct sound came from behind the doors.

Chapter 793: Morora

Hearing the sounds from behind the door, the faces of all the serious offenders changed, except for Lumian.

Guei blurted out, "What's behind the door?"

Could exile actually mean being sent to some monster to be its food?

"Behind the door is a path leading to your place of exile," the beautiful woman with the oval face answered simply. "There are no monsters waiting to eat you, but it is indeed dangerous. I don't know the specifics, but there's definitely a chance for you to survive. It's much better than being hanged or shot."

Guei, Lez, and the others exchanged glances, then looked at the clergy in white robes trimmed with brass. They were tempted but eventually suppressed their urge.

They believed they were no match for the clergy of the Church of Knowledge, especially the beautiful woman who clearly held a higher status.

Guei glanced at Lumian and saw that the wanted criminal, who claimed to have committed various serious crimes, looked calm and unafraid.

"I will open the door in a moment. You will enter on your own. Anyone who stays behind will have an additional charge tagged on, and be sentenced to death on the spot," the beautiful woman said, raising her hands. In her light blue eyes, countless illusory lights seemed to float.

Dark, dim rain fell silently from a height of about four meters, drenching Lumian and the others.

Lumian immediately felt irritated, a wave of violent emotions surging within him.

It seemed like the blood of Omebella was stirring.

"What did you do to us?" Guei asked, unsure and alarmed.

The beautiful woman in the beige coat with brass trim explained in a teaching tone,

"This is a mystic technique called 'Harps' Rain of Sterility.' It renders you infertile but can be reversed with the corresponding mystic technique or by a professional doctor.

"We don't want babies born in the place of exile. They are innocent."

Rain of Sterility... No wonder Omebella's blood reacted so strongly... I wonder if this secret technique will affect me or if the special properties of Omebella's bloodline will neutralize it... If it works, would it prevent embryos from implanting if I were influenced by the Great Mother in the future? It probably depends on the rank of the influence... Lumian thought that the Rain of Sterility might not

be a bad thing.
The other serious offenders didn't see it as a problem either. Some already had children, while others were too cold-blooded or twisted to think much about offspring.
The beautiful woman stepped back a few paces, faced the brass doors, and pressed her hands in the air.
The doors emitted a heavy, metallic creaking sound and slowly opened.
For some reason, Guei and the others felt an urge to go through the doors, stepping into the dim passage beyond.
They didn't notice that, except for the beautiful woman, the clergy of the Church of Knowledge had retreated to the edge of the corridor, standing on the steps when the doors opened.
Lumian felt the same urge, sensing something familiar yet unknown calling to him from deep within the passage.
He walked in the middle of the group, hearing the clang of the closing doors behind them.
The passage dimmed significantly, illuminated only by glowing gems embedded in the walls.
How extravagant... Lumian instinctively thought.
Guei glanced around and whispered, "Should we stay here and wait until there are fewer guards outside, then find a way to escape?"
"Do you think the exiled people before us didn't think of that?" Vijepan sneered. "And we're still shackled. How do we escape?"
Lumian watched coldly, noticing that Guei could somewhat resist the urge to flee while the other serious offenders were finding excuses to reject his suggestion.
After they argued for two or three minutes, Lumian casually asked, "Do we have any food? What if the guards only have a lapse every few days?"
Without waiting for Guei to answer, Lumian continued, "Actually, there is food. Each one of you is food."
He turned to Lez, the human chef, and asked with a smile, "How would you prepare us?"
"Suitable for stewing and pickling. You need the right spices to prevent the taste from turning sour," Lez replied, his face lighting up.
Guei fell silent for a few seconds, then, handcuffed and shackled, began to walk slowly down the passage. Lumian followed at the same pace.
They walked for what felt like seven or eight hours, though Lumian suspected his sense of time was distorted.
During this time, no one chose to stop. It seemed like they were

heading not for a City of Exiles but a Land of Hope.
They frequently heard the indescribable terrifying sounds, prompting the human chef, Lez, to comment, "It's like we're walking down a monster's long esophagus, heading for its stomach. The sounds are its digestive movements."
Lumian agreed, while the others felt their hair stand on end.
Finally, they saw stone steps leading upwards.
This seemed to signify that the end was near.
Climbing the steps and pushing open a heavy wooden door, Lumian and the others were momentarily blinded by the bright sunlight, causing them to instinctively close their eyes. The indescribable, chilling sounds ceased.
Almost simultaneously, a gentle voice said, "Welcome to the City of Exiles, Morora."
Just as I thought... Lumian sighed silently, opened his eyes, and looked around.
They were in a grand prayer hall of a cathedral. Sunlight streamed through stained glass windows, creating a sacred and radiant scene.
The walls without windows were adorned with murals depicting mythical stories, while below stood brass bookshelves filled with various books and scrolls.
It felt more like a library than a church.
The speaker was an old man in a white robe trimmed with brass. He was in his sixties or seventies, with graying hair, gentle and clear amber eyes, and no trace of cloudiness. He held a thick book in his left hand, a standard scholar-clergyman of the Church of Knowledge.
Yet Lumian felt he wasn't a real person, suspecting he was a specially crafted puppet.
"Morora? This place is called Morora?" Guei asked curiously, opening his eyes.
The old man nodded. "I am Heraberg, responsible for all theological affairs in Morora."
As he spoke, he extended his right hand, pointing at Lumian and the others.
The shackles, handcuffs, and chains through their collarbones softened instantly, as if made of mud.
With a clatter, they fell from the bodies of the serious offenders, hitting the gray and white stone floor with metallic thuds.
The serious offenders' hearts sank, abandoning any bad thoughts.
Heraberg handed out the thick book and a brass-cased pen.
"Register your names. This signifies your official status as residents of Morora."

Lumian complied, taking the book and writing "Louis."
Next was Guei. He took the book and pen and tentatively asked Heraberg, "How do you know we're writing our real names?"
Heraberg replied calmly, "The past is not important. In Morora, the present and the future matter."
Guei pondered for a while, unsure of the clergyman, Heraberg's meaning.
Considering that the Church of Knowledge could exchange information via telegram, he didn't use a fake name but wrote his real name honestly.
After all the serious offenders finished registering, Heraberg looked at them and said, "You must follow the rules here. Most laws are the same as in other cities in Lenburg, but dueling is legal if both parties agree. Non-violent protests are also allowed. We have a dedicated team to maintain order in Morora."
The honest-looking, middle-aged Lez asked, "Can we join the enforcement team?"
"The enforcement team is made up entirely of experimental personnel," Heraberg replied warmly.
Guei asked, "How do we become experimental personnel?"
Vijepan asked grimly, "What happens if we break the law here? Jail time or death penalty?"
Heraberg smiled.
"The worst punishment for breaking the law here is becoming an experimental personnel."
"Wouldn't that make us enforcers?" Guei was stunned.
Isn't that encouraging us to break the law?
Lumian recalled the term "experimental personnel" frequently appearing in the 0-01 sealed information.
Just from that, he knew becoming experimental personnel was definitely not a good thing.
Heraberg's expression remained unchanged.
"Yes, but remember, besides the church's overseers, at least two experimental personnel are discarded daily."
Discarded... Guei and the others found this term strangely terrifying.
"How many people are in Morora now?" Lumian asked a peculiar question.
Heraberg replied with a smile, "Nearly 200,000. The city has farms, mines, and factories around it, all part of Morora."
"Nearly 200,000? Does Lenburg have that many serious offenders?" Lumian was slightly surprised.
Heraberg professionally explained, "It's accumulated over generations, and we also spend money to import serious offenders

from abroad."
Import... makes it sound like importing talent... Lumian pondered for a few seconds, not in a hurry to "commit a crime," planning to apply to become experimental personnel, hoping to get close to the sealed 0-01.
He bade farewell to Heraberg and headed for the exit of the library-like cathedral, intending to first find the two parts of the Abscessed Hand.

Chapter 794: The Price of Meddling

Behind Lumian, Vijepan continued questioning Heraberg, the clergy of the Church of Knowledge, "In a legal duel, can I do anything to the other party without facing punishment?"
"Yes," Heraberg confirmed.
Vijepan's eyes lit up, feeling as if he had found paradise.
He excitedly swallowed.
Gulp... He heard a similar sound next to him.
He turned his head and saw that the sound came from a woman with long brown hair, Julie.
The "collector" was also excited, while the human chef, Lez, licked his lips.
He was already hungry.
Lumian didn't bother watching the other offenders' performances. He left the library-like cathedral and surveyed the surroundings.
The buildings in this area were ancient, reminiscent of early Fifth Epoch styles with their heavy columns and arches, giving a sense of grandeur and simplicity.
Behind the cathedral was a seemingly endless graveyard. Tombstones stood amidst the trees, with many raised graves dotting the landscape.
This reminded Lumian of a line from the 0-01 sealed information: "Place it in an underground mausoleum with a large number of soldier mannequins. Construct a cemetery with more than a million corpses above it..."
Is the underground mausoleum sealing 0-01 right below? Just as Lumian withdrew his gaze, the previously sunny sky darkened. Thick clouds gathered, and the sound of thunder rumbled.
The weather changes so quickly... No wonder the information mentioned Morora frequently experiencing extreme weather... Lumian sighed as he looked into the distance, seeing mountain ranges resembling giant beasts lying at the horizon, blocking anyone who might want to leave secretly.
Of course, this was just a metaphor, as the residents of Morora never thought of leaving the city.
Lumian felt a slight reluctance too.
The underground was calling to him.
"We need to find a place to settle down quickly, or we'll get soaked," Guei's voice came from beside Lumian.
He had also left the cathedral, and as a local of Azshara, his words were quite formal.
"Yeah," Lumian replied with a smile as he walked into the large square in front of the cathedral.

Guei followed, glancing back and saying in surprise, "There's such a large graveyard here?"
"A graveyard with over a million, even tens of millions of corpses," Lumian replied casually.
Guei nodded thoughtfully.
"History books record a large-scale grave relocation in the early Fifth Epoch in the Lenburg region to address the aftermath of the Pale Disaster. Was it moved here?"
"Perhaps," Lumian said as they crossed the square. He quietly activated the black mark representing the Abscessed Hand, but did not actually use it.
He was sensing the approximate location of the other two parts of the Abscessed Hand.
To his surprise, he sensed more than two parts. Different directions within the City of Exiles had subtle responses.
Hand Bro's body parts got dismembered? Lumian silently muttered.
He chose the direction with the strongest response.
After walking about a street's length, he heard the clashing of metal and saw two men fiercely fighting with sharp swords as a crowd watched.
Duels with fatalities happen daily... Lumian reviewed the 0-01 sealed information. He didn't hurry, deciding to watch for a while.
Guei did the same, seemingly assessing the strength of Morora's residents.
The fight lasted two or three minutes, ending with a man in a black jacket being slashed across the chest and stomach, his intestines spilling out as he convulsed and died.
A team of men and women in black robes, their expressions indifferent, appeared, silently dragging the stripped corpse away and cleaning the blood from the street, like machines following a set procedure.
The onlookers dispersed. A small man in a brown-green cap, smiling kindly, walked past Lumian and Guei, glancing at them.
"New here?" the small man asked warmly.
"How can you tell?" Guei asked curiously.
The small man laughed.
"You still have that new look, not yet fully integrated into Morora!"
His voice suddenly turned sharp, as if possessed by something unknown.
Lumian watched the small man in silence, observing his changes.
The small man waved.
"Haha, I'm Worms. Let's have a drink sometime."
As Worms walked down another street, Guei suddenly spoke to

Lumian, "Don't you feel like you're missing something?"
"I noticed," Lumian replied nonchalantly. "He's quick."
He had only noticed his Traveler's Bag was about to be taken when Worms withdrew his hand.
He must be a real Beyonder, a true Marauder. That sudden state change was likely a performance to distract attention.
"Why didn't you expose him if you noticed? Afraid of retaliation?" Guei didn't understand Lumian's reaction.
"I wanted to see what he would do," Lumian replied with a smile, hands in his pockets, slowly following the route Worms had taken.
Guei watched his back for a while, then decided to find a place to stay first.
...
Once out of Lumian and Guei's sight, Worms quickened his pace, darting through several alleys in a circuitous route.
After confirming he had shaken off any potential pursuers, he stopped in a secluded alley and took out a dark black coin pouch from inside his clothes.
It was Lumian's Traveler's Bag.
"Haha, these new fools are so careless. Let's see what's inside..." Worms reached into the Traveler's Bag.
His expression changed slightly, filled with intense surprise.
He could "see" the pouch's value, sensing many items with spirituality inside, but he hadn't expected it to be a rare spatial item, holding what felt like a small room.
What a pleasant surprise... Worms pulled out one of the items.
What greeted his eyes was a half-decomposed, dark blue swollen corpse, dripping yellowish-red pus.
Smack!
Worms recoiled, letting the half-corpse fall to the ground.
Wh- His face turned horrified.
Who carries a half-decomposed corpse around?
And a highly decayed corpse at that!
Even in Morora, filled with countless murderers, this is the most twisted thing!
No wonder he was exiled here!
Steadying himself, Worms reached into the Traveler's Bag again, pulling out a piece of smooth, white leather.
He couldn't take his eyes off it, as if staring at the skin of a dream lover.
He quickly noticed some black words on the leather that he didn't recognize.
Seems to be words that can trigger Beyonder powers. This leather must be very valuable. I should copy it and find someone to

decipher it without arousing suspicion, Worms thought in delight, caressing the leather, unwilling to let go.
Suddenly, he felt his throat itch.
Cough, cough, cough!
He started coughing, more and more violently.
Within seconds, he coughed so hard it felt like his heart would tear apart.
Pfft!
Worms spat out a mouthful of blood.
This isn't right! *How did I suddenly get so sick?* Worms, vaguely understanding, threw the leather to the ground.
But his coughing continued, even more violently.
While coughing, he thought of a way to save himself: That guy put such dangerous leather in his pocket, he must have prepared a cure...
Yes, there must be one!
Worms reached into the Traveler's Bag again.
He first pulled out a gray-white lightning-shaped brooch.
A thick, silvery-white lightning bolt suddenly descended from the stacked clouds, striking him.
Boom!
The thunder echoed, and Worms fell, his body charred and twitching.
Already gravely ill, the lightning strike left him near death.
How... how could I suddenly be struck... by lightning... I, I...
Worms's vision darkened, his confusion and regret lingering as he closed his eyes.
He soon stopped breathing.
About ten seconds later, Lumian turned into the alley, walked to Worms, looked down at his body, and shook his head with a smile.
"Rummaging through others' belongings is very dangerous."
After a pause, Lumian regrettably sighed.
"I wanted to follow you and get in touch with Morora's Beyonders. You let me down.
"And you didn't even get to the more dangerous items."
As he spoke, Lumian picked up the Traveler's Bag, placing the items back inside in their compressed form: the Fury of the Sea brooch, the Demoness of Despair human leather, and the half-corpse of the Abscessed Hand.
"I guess being a generous soul is all you can do," Lumian muttered, extracting 537 sassen gold from Worms.
That was about 2863 verl d'or.
Pocketing the generous soul's gift, Lumian waited for Worms's Beyonder characteristics to manifest.

About two minutes later, a team of black-robed enforcers entered the alley. The leader looked at Lumian expressionlessly and said, "Did you kill him?"
"No, he was struck by lightning. Maybe he did too many bad things," Lumian replied with a smile, explaining earnestly. "He was a thief and stole my stuff, so I chased him here."
The enforcers stared at Lumian as if verifying his truthfulness.
After a moment, the leader nodded. "You may leave."
Lumian didn't move, smiling as he said, "His belongings should be mine, right?"

Chapter 795: "Old Friend"

The leader of the enforcers was around forty, clean-shaven, with dark brown eyes.

He responded to Lumian's question without any expression, "There's no such rule."

He meant there was no rule stating that all items on a thief's body should go to the victim.

Lumian smiled and asked, "But there's also no law specifically prohibiting it, right?"

"Right." The leader of the enforcers nodded slowly.

Lumian's smile broadened. "Coming to Morora means cutting all ties with the past, right?"

This was inferred from what the clergyman Heraberg had said in the cathedral.

"Yes." The enforcer did not deny it.

Lumian probed further, "And this thief doesn't have any other heirs in Morora, does he?"

Before being sent to Morora, serious criminals were sterilized. Unless they were part of a criminal family or found a partner with similar criminal interests here, no one in Morora had legal heirs.

The enforcer didn't answer Lumian immediately. He pulled a thick book from under his black robe and started searching for the relevant records.

"Do you know this thief's name?" Lumian asked thoughtfully.

The enforcer nodded. "His name is Worms."

Soon, the records were found. The enforcer read in a flat voice, "His parents and siblings are not in Morora, and he hasn't married here, at least not officially registered."

"So, according to the laws from where I come from, a thief's possessions go to the person who caught them if there are no other heirs or claimants," Lumian began to explain, "Just like in a legal duel, the victor can take the spoils."

The enforcer stared at Lumian for a few seconds before saying, "Okay."

He and his team stood patiently as Worms's Beyonder characteristics manifested, merging with one of his fingers, which then broke off, turning semi-transparent black.

Lumian put away the Beyonder characteristics but didn't leave immediately. Instead, he stayed, watching as the enforcers dragged away the body and cleaned the blood and scorch marks from the alley.

The clouds above thickened, and lightning and thunder grew more frequent.

Finally, the alley was clean and quiet, with only Lumian remaining.
Lumian nodded thoughtfully, murmuring to himself, The enforcers seem to remember the appearance and names of every Morora resident...
After becoming enforcers, they are still human but not quite human anymore...
He felt that the so-called enforcers, who were actually experimental personnel, acted like puppets following set procedures, lacking self-awareness and deep thinking.
He had deliberately asked if Worms's belongings were his, not out of greed for the Beyonder characteristics, although that played a small part, as Beyonder characteristics were valuable. He had long figured that Worms wasn't a Sequence 7 Marauder, as a Sequence 7 called Cryptologist would have deciphered some of the secrets of the items in the Traveler's Bag and understood their dangers, not dying just after examining three items.
Lumian even doubted Worms had reached Sequence 8 Swindler, because the thief didn't seem smart enough.
Lumian's questions to the enforcers were not to showcase his talent in being a negotiator or exploit loopholes but to test the enforcers' state.
And he had his answer.
He felt that after becoming enforcers, these serious criminals became like the wax figures in the Sauron family's Red Swan Castle or a combination of the Iron and Blood Cross Order Supervisor Olson, but without the violent madness, instead exhibiting a gentle indifference.
Is this the combined effect of the 0-01 corruption and Morora's sealing influence? Lumian was unsure if he would retain his self-awareness if he joined the enforcers, or end up just following Morora's rules, becoming a puppet of the City of Exiles or 0-01.
This made him waver in his original plan to approach 0-01 as an enforcer.
He laughed softly, asking in a low voice, "Termiboros, do you want to be Morora's puppet?"
Termiboros ignored him.
Whoosh!
The downpour finally arrived, shrouding Morora in a mist of rain and a doomsday-like gloom.
Lumian followed the shelter of the huge buildings, avoiding the rain as he headed to the place where the strongest feedback from the Abscessed Hand's missing parts came from.
When he reached his destination, his clothes were half-soaked by

the wind and rain, and the water on the street was nearly up to the steps.
Lumian glanced to the side, seeing a sign by the door depicting a knife, fork, and wine glass, with the words in Lenburg: "Carnivore"
A bar serving food? Carnivore... Lumian pondered the bar's name, suddenly having a strange guess, The feedback indicated that parts of Hand Bro's body are scattered across Morora, but originally there were only two pieces...
The demon with the goat face in the Underworld cut and ate Hand Bro's rotten flesh daily, and it regenerated...
This bar is called "Carnivore"...
Could it be that one piece of Hand Bro's body was obtained by the bar's owner, saving them the cost of buying meat and using it as a substitute?
Other bar owners in different cities might not do this, but in Morora, they likely would, since they were exiled here for serious crimes. The bar owner might even be a perverted butcher who killed people and sold their meat...
If that's true, things will be troublesome. Who knows how many people have eaten and integrated Hand Bro's rotten flesh, and what impact that might have...
Can I merge the remaining parts once I find the original two pieces?
Lumian muttered silently for a while, then ran through the rain and pushed open the heavy wooden door of the Carnivore bar.
Upon arriving in Morora, after almost reassembling the Abscessed Hand's body, he had started referring to it as Hand Bro, half-jokingly and half to show "closeness," hoping it wouldn't attack him when fully restored, as there might be other dangers then.
Just as he entered the bar, bringing in the rain, Lumian saw a familiar figure.
That figure sat on a high stool in front of the bar, their hair tinged with red, eyebrows and eyes leaning towards brown, looking handsome yet unlikable due to their overly sharp features.
Albus!
Albus Medici!
Lumian tensed, though his expression remained calm as he smiled and walked towards the bar.
He used to think Albus Medici was mysterious and possibly involved in some consOriginal. Later, he learned about the existence of the Red Angel Medici, realizing this former King of Angels had orchestrated a massive plot and successfully obtained the Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristic of the Hunter pathway from Vermonda Sauron in Fourth Epoch Trier.
This made Lumian associate Albus Medici with the Red Angel,

suspecting Albus was the King of Angels' agent, sent to Morora to find a way to get close to 0-01.
For Lumian, this was bad news, as Medici was close to ascending to the Red Priest's divine throne!
Albus Medici noticed Lumian's gaze and turned, looking back at Lumian, who had made no effort to disguise himself beyond restoring his hair color.
"What brings you here?" Lumian smiled as if meeting an old friend.
Albus returned the smile. "What brings you here?"
"Of course, I was captured," Lumian laughed, sitting beside Albus and tapping the bar counter, "Give me a steak, tenderloin, medium-rare," he told the bartender, who looked as if he had lost his parents.
"Are you mimicking me? Also being randomly captured and ordering a tenderloin steak," Albus said, one foot on the stool's footrest, the other resting on his knee.
Before Lumian could respond, he relaxed and asked with a smile, "What crime did you commit?"
"Murder, blasphemy, arson, causing explosions, kidnapping..." Lumian repeated the crimes he had told Guei and others before, but not in the same order.
He was relaxed as he asked, "What about you?"
"Me?" Albus jiggled his foot resting on his knee, "Murder, arson, inciting riots, attempting to overthrow the government."
"Which government?" Lumian asked in a tone of old friends reuniting.
"Intis." Albus shrugged, "Don't ask me why I tried to overthrow the Intis government and ended up in this strange city in Lenburg. I don't know either."
That's such a patronizing answer... Lumian nodded in agreement. "Yeah, I didn't commit crimes in Lenburg either."
As the two former Iron and Blood Cross Order members "chatted," two steaks were served.
Looking at the steaks on white porcelain plates, slightly bloody and with a good-looking texture, Lumian remained silent and didn't pick up his knife and fork.
He sensed a connection.
This was indeed the Abscessed Hand's rotten flesh, cut from the body!
After a few seconds, Lumian glanced to the side and found Albus Medici also staring at the "steak" without moving.
Lumian smiled and asked, "Why aren't you eating?"
Albus responded with a radiant smile. "Why aren't you?"

Chapter 796: "Duel"

In response to Albus's question, Lumian let out a soft laugh and muttered to himself, This guy seems pretty sharp...
No idea when he was exiled to Morora, but this must be his first time eating here...
Did he come here because he noticed some people in Morora behaving strangely after eating at this bar?
As these thoughts raced through his mind, Lumian slapped the bar counter.
He jumped off the stool and coldly said to the bartender, whose expression had remained grim.
"Serving this kind of meat as steak to me? Get your boss out here!"
The bartender was taken aback. "Are you certain?"
He wasn't embarrassed or angry at Lumian's attitude; instead, there seemed to be a slight hint of pleasant surprise.
Lumian didn't answer but conveyed with his eyes that he wanted the boss to hurry up and come out.
The bartender immediately shouted, "Boss! Boss! Someone's about to wreck your bar!"
Within seconds, a figure rushed out from the kitchen.
The figure had messy, fluffy hair and a very fat face, layered with flesh that made his eyes appear small, yet his body was quite standard, showing no sign of obesity.
At this moment, he was wearing a white apron and holding a cleaver, glaring angrily at the two customers near the bar, shouting in Lenburg, "Who? Who's going to wreck my bar?"
Lumian pointed at the steak on the white porcelain plate and sneered, "You think I can't tell what kind of meat this is?"
"If I say it's steak, it's steak," the fat-faced boss retorted without backing down.
Lumian didn't argue further. He took out a black glove from the Traveler's Bag and tossed it in front of him.
"I challenge you to a duel," Lumian said calmly.
Throwing down a glove was a customary way to issue a duel challenge in Intis.
The boss glanced at the black glove on the ground, his layers of fat shifting to reveal a light yellow beard.
He was laughing.
He responded to Lumian's challenge, "Okay."
As soon as he spoke, he raised the cleaver and swung it down at Lumian.
Lumian sidestepped the blow, but suddenly felt he couldn't use his teleportation ability.

The contract ability from the Abscessed Hand seemed to be stripped away by some strange power!
Lumian recalled Ludwig's description of the Sequence 5 Depriver of the Gourmet pathway and suspected this boss-cum-chef was a blessed one of this pathway.
No wonder he can make Hand Bro's rotten flesh look and smell like real steak...
A bestowed not executed but exiled to Morora?
Stop dumping all the trash in Morora...
Is it because they fear Morora's population decline, risking the seal on 0-01?
As these thoughts flashed through his mind, Lumian swung his shoulder, his arm swelling, and punched out with his right fist.
His fist burst into bright, blazing-white flames, like a peacock's tail, heading straight for the bartender.
Boom!
As his fist struck the side of the heavy cleaver, a violent explosion occurred.
The blazing-white light lit up the entire bar, the violent blast overturning nearby stools and throwing the fat-faced boss away.
Albus reacted quickly, jumping off his stool and perching on the bar counter far from the blast area.
He pulled one foot up, resting it on the bar, watching Lumian's duel with interest.
The bartender was also caught in the blast, thrown against the liquor shelf, doused in the fragrant liquid from shattered bottles.
He was nearly set on fire.
The bar owner, who took the brunt of the explosion, had his chest clothes torn, revealing blood, charred flesh, and white bones.
His face had similar wounds, but the layers of fat kept it from affecting his skull.
The wounds were writhing and healing rapidly in an unnatural, inhuman way, as if they would soon be completely healed.
This isn't a power or trait typical of a Depriver. None of the middle or low Sequences in the Gourmet pathway have this ability. Did he gain this from a special kind of food as a Chef? It's similar to how Hand Bro's rotten flesh can regenerate after being eaten... Lumian retreated a few steps from the bar owner, putting distance between them.
As he noticed the other party's peculiarity, he also realized he had lost another ability-Spell of Harrumph.
Can a Depriver sense which of my abilities and traits are most dangerous to them? Even if they don't know exactly what those abilities and traits are, can they still deprive me of them based on

the level of danger they pose? Lumian calmly formed a massive, blazing-white fireball and shot it at the bar owner.
The bar owner didn't dodge. He raised his nearly shattered cleaver and slashed at the blazing-white fireball.
The fireball split in two, losing its momentum and destructive aura. The bar owner opened his mouth wide and sucked it in like a whale swallowing water, remaining unharmed.
At that moment, Lumian laughed.
More blazing-white fireballs rapidly formed around him, whistling through the air toward the bar owner.
Behind him, blazing-white fire crows appeared one after another, flying in wide arcs to flank the bar owner.
Lumian wanted to see how many fireballs the Depriver could handle and if he could eat them all without getting overwhelmed.
The bar owner's eyes narrowed, and he immediately spewed the blazing-white flames from his stomach, transforming them into a torrent to meet the incoming fireballs.
Seeing this, Albus flipped over the bar counter.
Rumble!
The fireballs exploded one after another upon contact with the flames.
The counter was flattened, the liquor shelves collapsed silently, and the mixed liquor burned in a fierce blaze.
The bartender, who had escaped to Albus's position, felt very fortunate he had reacted in time.
Other patrons either shrank to the edges of the room or escaped the hall, showing a wealth of experience.
Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh! The blazing-white Fire Ravens, which had deliberately avoided the front, fell on the bar owner's back one after another.
By then, the bar owner was covered in a semi-transparent crimson glow, like solidified moonlight.
Rumble!
Despite the explosions and flames from the Fire Ravens, the bar owner's crimson glow didn't dim. Instead, it brightened with the fire's reflection.
When the flames finally subsided, the bar owner returned to his normal appearance. He lifted his cleaver and looked at where Lumian had been standing.
No one was there.
Lumian was nowhere to be seen in the hall either.
The bar owner was momentarily stunned.
Almost simultaneously, a figure emerged from his shadow.
Lumian, his eyes iron-black, struck the bar owner's crotch with his

blazing-white flame-covered right fist.
Amid the rumbling, Lumian's fist hit its mark, penetrating the Depriver's intestines with blazing-white flames.
Standing up straight, Lumian lifted the bar owner, letting the flames surge into his stomach.
Then, Lumian withdrew his right fist and threw the bar owner to the ground.
With a thud, the bar owner's crotch split open, intestines spilling out, and his stomach, though intact, was scorched and oozing yellow-green fluid.
Lumian looked at the bar owner's pained, shrunken eyes and mocked, "Did you turn your brain into food too? You blocked one round of attacks, then stayed in the same spot without moving. Did you not consider that I might use your shadow?"
The bar owner's face twisted as he murmured, "Turning... my own... brain into... food... Is it possible?"
His voice faded, and he died, lying motionless on the ground.
Lumian stared at the Depriver's corpse, not thinking about his opponent's response, but noting something unusual about the battle.
Deprivers sure have a variety of abilities. Though each one is basic and crude, their combat applications are quite formidable...
If this guy hadn't reacted so sluggishly after I vanished, I wouldn't have attacked his weak spot so easily. I might have needed to use one of the mystical items from the Traveler's Bag...
In comparison, Worms the Marauder didn't have this problem...
As he thought, Lumian shook his hand, revealing painful corrosive wounds caused by the stomach acid of the bar owner when he delivered the strike at his stomach.
His hand had been protected by the blazing-white flames at the time.
Despite knowing he couldn't prevent the bar owner's boons from returning to their source, Lumian squatted down, pulled a plain sword from the Traveler's Bag, and used his flames to separate the stomach from the corpse.
He planned to ask Ludwig if this could be made into a dish with special effects or if it could be used as a unique material by an Artisan.
Finished with this task, Lumian stood and asked the bartender, who had just emerged from hiding and was severely injured, "How many years has your boss been exiled in Morora?"
"Five or six years, I think," the bartender answered with an uncertain look.
Five or six years... That thief looked younger, probably only exiled

for a year or two... The longer one stays in Morora, the more likely they are to show symptoms of experimental personnel-symptoms of 0-01 corruption. No, the sealing information didn't mention this, and it doesn't happen in Trier... Did the bar owner do something in Morora that caused him to start turning into an experimental subject? Lumian pondered as he looked around and smiled. "Don't take my spoils."

He referred to the bar owner's money.

Lumian then walked towards the corridor beside the bar.

Based on the origin of the "steak" and the Chef's position, he suspected the Abscessed Hand's body part was in the kitchen.

Entering the kitchen, he saw a half-decayed, swollen, blue-black corpse openly displayed on the cooking counter.

Chapter 797: Determining the Situation

Looking at the swollen, blue-black corpse on the counter, Lumian chuckled to himself, They're not even trying to hide it, are they? Classic Morora, the City of Exiles...

Lumian did a quick inspection, confirming that the highly decayed corpse was indeed the other body part of the Abscessed Hand. Besides missing the left half, the corresponding part of the head, and the Abscessed Hand's body itself, it was fairly intact.

If it weren't for the rotting flesh at the spine writhing and trying to regenerate, Lumian might have doubted that the two steaks served to him and Albus had come from this corpse, let alone that dozens, perhaps hundreds, of such "steaks" had been sold.

This made Lumian frown slightly, a question he had pondered earlier resurfacing in his mind: Must I do a recall of all the steaks sold?

Judging by the corpse's completeness, it doesn't seem necessary...

Moreover, the residents of Morora had been eating such steaks for some time. Who knows if they've actually digested and absorbed the rotten flesh...

From what I sense about the subtle connections between the corpse, even if digested, the rotten flesh likely just changes form without fundamentally altering...

As he pondered, Lumian quickly stuffed the half-decayed corpse into the Traveler's Bag, using the Sword of Courage and other plain swords to separate it from the other half to prevent unwanted fusion before finding the head.

"So we were served this stuff, and it looked pretty appetizing," Albus's voice came from the kitchen doorway as Lumian put away the half of the Abscessed Hand.

Albus, the former member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order and Medici family member, wore a black jacket with dark red patterns, one hand in his pocket, marveling.

He didn't seem disgusted by almost eating rotten flesh steak.

Lumian turned and responded with a smile, "I was looking forward to seeing what changes you'd undergo after eating it."

"Gradually gain some self-healing ability, become stronger on moonlit nights, and learn some dark spells," Albus replied in a report-like tone.

"But in return, self-control would significantly decrease, intelligence would regress, and nightmares would be frequent."

"So, you came to investigate after noticing the odd behavior of those guys?" Lumian asked with a smile.

He wasn't really seeking confirmation; he had already determined

it. He was using this question to indicate that he was also investigating and hadn't come specifically for the half-corpse.
"A Hunter must conceal their true purpose to avoid traps set by others." The red-haired Albus smiled. "They tried to keep this a secret, hoping only they and their collaborators could enjoy this bar's special food."
"Who in Morora isn't selfish?" Lumian asked, changing the topic. "How did you notice their intelligence regression?"
Albus raised his right hand, palm up. "If their intelligence hadn't regressed, how could they have revealed their secret to me so easily, leading me to this bar?"
Lumian nodded slightly, looking thoughtful. "So, should I kill you to keep this secret from spreading?"
Albus met Lumian's gaze calmly, smiling. "Do you think those idiots can keep a secret?"
With that, the Medici family member turned and walked towards the bar hall, exposing his back to Lumian.
Lumian stood still, watching him leave, as if deep in thought.
For a moment, he had the urge to kill.
He considered using this chance to eliminate Albus Medici to prevent him from interfering with his approach to 0-01, or even marking it for the Red Angel before him.
Ultimately, Lumian resisted this impulse.
For two reasons: First, he judged that becoming an experimental subject would severely impact his self-awareness. Unless it was his only option, he didn't want to try it. In that case, having an extra person, a "cannon fodder" to help navigate the dangers, was a viable strategy.
Second, he wasn't confident he could kill Albus Medici. If Albus was still in the same state as when they explored the Red Swan Castle, he would be easily dealt with, but several months had passed. He had become a Reaper and had even fully digested the corresponding potion. It was unlikely the other party hadn't made any progress.
Moreover, if Albus was indeed representing the Red Angel in approaching 0-01, the King of Angels would likely enhance His descendant's strength, providing powerful items to ensure he was among the apex below demigods, capable of handling Morora's dangers.
Lumian didn't leave the kitchen immediately. He checked around again.
He was looking for any other special ingredients-the bar owner's slightly sluggish behavior made him suspect it was caused by randomly eating something in Morora, a common cause of death

for Beyonders of the Gourmet pathway.
Unfortunately, Lumian only found ordinary ingredients like flour, butter, and milk.
He then went up to the second floor of the Carnivore bar, entering the Depriver's bedroom.
He planned to stay here as the duel winner for the time being.
The bedroom was cleaner than Lumian expected-no grease stains, no cockroaches, mice, or insects. Aside from being slightly messy, it was fine.
Lumian walked around the bedroom, trying to activate the black mark on his right shoulder to see if he could teleport out of Morora.
He couldn't sense any of the places he had been to.
As expected, I can't leave. I can only teleport within this mountainous area... But it's not like Morora residents want to leave... I wonder if Albus has such thoughts... Lumian muttered silently, taking out ritual materials from the Traveler's Bag.
He conducted his second experiment: Summoning a messenger!
But neither the doll messenger nor his own messenger responded to his call.
Disconnected from the spirit world? At least to some extent... As expected from a place sealing 0-01... Lumian stood at the window, gazing at the dim environment and the slightly less intense rain, feeling the cold dampness seeping in.
He proceeded with the third experiment according to his plan.
He walked to the full-length mirror in the room, placed his right hand on it, and activated a black mark on his body.
He was using the contractual ability from Bloody Jack to sense the mirror marks he had left elsewhere!
In the blink of an eye, Lumian sensed three faint marks through the mirror.
They were in Moron Avigny's study, the Blue Avenger's treasury, and Franca and Jenna's rented apartment.
This meant that if Lumian could enter the mirror, he might be able to use his teleportation ability to reach the mirrors corresponding to these marks. Even if not, he should be able to exchange information with the outside world through them!
Lumian was both pleasantly surprised and satisfied that his hypothesis was confirmed.
Having read the 0-01 data, he knew its origin and its connection to Fourth Epoch Trier. Given the similar sealing methods, many details should also be consistent-Trier had a special mirror world, so this place likely did too. Trier had Mirror People, so this place likely had them too!

The experimental subjects' detail, "if not blindfolded, the one who leaves the mausoleum will be a monster resembling him," was evidence of the Mirror People and the special mirror world's existence.
Based on these premises, Lumian thought using the mirror world's abilities might establish some contact with the outside world.
With this hypothesis, he borrowed the Mirror Cufflink from Franca, who had become a Demoness of Affliction. In a few days, she could use the pretext of investigating Mirror People to request charms from the Demoness Sect that would allow her to use the mirror world for teleportation.
Lumian reached into the Traveler's Bag and took out the glass-like cufflink.
He didn't rush to confirm if it could be used to leave directly or only to transmit information, as the Mirror Cufflink had only four uses left. He'd wait for important information or urgent matters to test it.
Grr, grr... At that moment, Lumian's stomach growled with hunger.
He couldn't help but gripe internally, Seriously, the Church of Knowledge is so stingy. Not even a meal or a sip of water before sending me into Morora. I'm not Ludwig, who can finish all the prison food...
Muttering, Lumian descended to the first floor, intending to cook something in the kitchen and wait for the rain to stop before looking for the Abscessed Hand's head.
By now, the bar owner's body had been taken away by the enforcers, and the bloodstains on the floor had been cleaned, but the destroyed bar counter and the hall's scorched remains hadn't been dealt with. Glass shards and wood splinters mixed with the scents of liquor and charred wood.
Just as Lumian picked up the bar owner's legacy left by the enforcers- 420 sassen gold-someone walked in from the doorway.
It was the humble-looking human meat chef, Lez.
Lez was soaked, glanced around, and asked Lumian, "Are you hiring a chef here?"
The Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence? Lumian suddenly laughed. "Sure, go to the kitchen and make something. I'll try it and see how it tastes."

Chapter 798: Hire

Lez looked at Lumian with confusion and asked, "Can you make decisions for the owner here?"

"Yes, because I am the owner now," Lumian replied with a smile, pointing to himself.

The human meat chef, Lez, was even more perplexed. "Weren't we just exiled to Morora together?"

It had been less than an hour since they arrived.

Lumian tilted his head and pointed his chin towards the destroyed bar area. "I had a duel with the previous owner and won this bar from him."

Lez's eyes suddenly lit up. "Is he dead? Where's his body?"

"The enforcers took it away, probably to be buried in the cemetery," Lumian said, walking to the edge of the hall and picking up a relatively intact chair, placing it next to the ruined bar.

Lez sighed regretfully but followed Lumian's suggestion and went into the kitchen to start cooking.

Lumian wandered to the bar area, searching for the two "steaks" he and Albus hadn't eaten.

They were torn to pieces in the violent explosion, scattered among the debris, completely charred and carbonized.

After examining them for a while, Lumian noticed that the steak fragments showed no signs of writhing or regeneration. The fire had destroyed any subtle connection to the corpse, making them seem entirely dead and no longer part of the Abscessed Hand.

These probably don't need to be recalled...

High-temperature flames can restrain the self-healing ability of the separated rotten flesh, but it's unclear how much it affects the corpse itself...

Besides, the separated rotten flesh must only have a limited self-healing ability; otherwise, each piece could grow into a new Hand Bro, and there'd be no need for Hand Bro to find the whole corpse...

After pondering for a while, Lumian brought over a small overturned round table from the edge of the hall and placed it next to the chair.

He sat down, patiently waiting for Lez to prepare lunch.

As time passed, Lez brought out a mixed salad, creamy mashed potatoes, and other dishes.

Lumian took a spoonful of mashed potatoes and tasted it, finding the texture unusually smooth and the flavors of starch, cream, and fat deliciously combined.

"Not bad," Lumian said, raising his left hand and giving a thumbs up.

Lez stood beside him, smiling humbly.
"I used to own a restaurant."
"A restaurant specializing in human meat?" Lumian teased provocatively.
Lez shook his head.
"Back then, I was a normal chef with excellent, but still human, cooking skills."
"Then why did you start eating people?" Lumian didn't directly ask when he started worshiping an evil god.
He didn't know which evil god corresponded to the Gourmet pathway.
Lez's expression gradually darkened.
"My wife had a friend who always filled her head with the idea of a luxurious lifestyle, introducing her to so-called high society members, even encouraging her to have affairs and squander money. She secretly mortgaged our restaurant; her goal was our restaurant from the start.
"After losing the restaurant, that friend stopped associating with my wife. My wife finally came to her senses but was too weak. She burned down the restaurant, killing herself in the process.
"Then a regular customer, who admired my cooking skills, approached me and asked if I wanted revenge. He offered to help, saying someone with my high-level cooking skills should worship the God of Cuisine, the great 'Devouring Whirlpool.'
"After that, I received a boon and slowly grew stronger.
"After becoming a true Chef, I found that woman and made her into the most satisfying meal of my life.
"From that day on, I enjoyed eating the flesh of the damned and gained the ability to discern who deserved to die."
"Was that woman also a follower of an evil god?" Hearing this, Lumian strongly suspected that the first person Lez ate was a bestowed of the Broker pathway.
Perhaps Lez's restaurant was part of a transaction.
"Yes," Lez confirmed, "She worshiped the so-called Truth. When she met my wife, she was still weak."
As expected... Lumian smiled.
The ability to discern who deserves to die is quite useful. When I capture a Broker pathway Sequence 7 or higher, I'll leave it to Ludwig to handle.
After finishing the meal Lez prepared, Lumian nodded in satisfaction.
"I'm willing to hire you as the chef for this bar. Let's discuss your compensation and responsibilities."
"Alright," Lez said, assuming a listening posture.

Lumian picked up a white napkin and wiped his mouth.
"There's quite a bit of wine left in the cellar. Clean up the bar, rebuild it, and display the wine. After that, you'll be responsible for hiring and managing bartenders and waitstaff, as well as reestablishing contact with suppliers."
"That's the job of a manager," Lez noted, having run a restaurant before.
Lumian chuckled in response.
"Yes, chef and manager.
"The bar's revenue, after costs, will all be yours."
"What about you?" Lez had never seen such an owner.
Not even wanting the money?
Lumian stood up, stretching his body, and casually said, "You'll be responsible for my meals, cleaning my room, and if there are special ingredients, making dishes or cocktails that give me the corresponding traits. Also, I don't eat human meat."
Lez stared at Lumian for a few seconds and said in a deep voice, "You seem to know a lot about a Chef's abilities."
Lumian glanced at the now-stopped rain outside and walked towards the bar's entrance, smiling.
"The previous owner of this bar was a Depriver, but unfortunately, I deprived him of his life, so he can't share his culinary skills with you."
Moreover, my godson is an Angel of your pathway.
Lez fell silent. As Lumian was about to leave the bar, he finally spoke, "I'll take good care of this bar."
Lumian didn't look back, raising his right hand and waving lightly in acknowledgment.
There were still some deep pools of water on the street outside, with pedestrians mainly walking on the sidewalks. The sky was now bright and sunny, as if there hadn't been a heavy rainstorm.
Following the subtle connection from the contract mark, Lumian walked towards the suspected location of the Abscessed Hand's head.
Turning a corner, he saw a drenched corpse lying under a book-engraved obelisk. It was Vijepan, the gloomy rapist-murderer who had been exiled to Morora with Lumian and others.
At this moment, his hands and feet were severed at the joints, his pants stripped off, and his groin a bloody mess with the most important part missing.
His eyes were wide open, frozen in pain and despair.
Lost the duel, huh? Lumian murmured with a silent laugh.
He almost whistled in admiration for the duel he hadn't witnessed.

It must have been exciting; whoever died deserved a toast.
Looks like that collector named Julie is stronger... Both she and Vijepan had ulterior motives, no, open intentions to provoke a duel... Lumian thought Julie was likely a Beyonder. Such knife skills weren't something an ordinary person could possess.
As for whether Vijepan was a Beyonder, Lumian couldn't tell for now.
Even if he was, his Beyonder characteristic should have been taken.
"That woman is formidable," a voice suddenly said beside Lumian.
A gentleman had come from the side of the small square.
He wore a half-high silk hat, a white shirt, a cashmere sweater, and a woolen suit jacket, with a bow tie and a cane in hand.
He looked just over thirty, with a thin face and gentle blue eyes, like a well-educated upper-class person.
Of course, in Morora, there were no good people, only bad people and worse people.
"Did you see their fight?" Lumian asked casually.
The gentleman smiled. "They initially wanted to borrow revolvers for a duel from the restaurant over there, but the waiter told them that there were too many duels today and all the guns were borrowed, leaving only two long swords.
"That woman was very skilled. This man blocked three strikes before being knocked down, having his hands and feet cut off, and his pants removed."
So Vijepan wasn't likely a Beyonder... Lumian shifted his gaze from the corpse to the gentleman and asked with a smile, "What's your name?"
The gentleman placed a hand on his chest and bowed.
"You can call me Gusain, or Count. I heard you killed Worms?"
"Worms, the thief?" Lumian laughed. "He was struck by lightning, nothing to do with me. If I had killed him, the enforcers would have arrested me."
Gusain smiled slightly. "There are ways to deceive the enforcers."
So you've noticed their rigidity and procedural nature too? Lumian thought for a few seconds before deciding to be "honest."
"Worms died because he wasn't lucky enough. The item he stole from me attracts lightning during rain."
"Then you can't be blamed," Gusain said understandingly.
He asked warmly, "How should I address you, and where are you staying now?"
"Louis, staying at the Carnivore bar," Lumian replied truthfully.
Gusain nodded slightly.
"Be wary of Bainar, the bar's owner and chef. He's dangerous and

cannibalistic."
Lumian smiled. "He's already dead."
Gusain paused for a moment before smiling. "You're more interesting than I expected. I hope you bring long-lost vitality to Morora."
Lumian didn't continue the topic, instead taking the opportunity to gather information.
"In Morora, apart from Heraberg from the Church of Knowledge, who else should I watch out for?"
Without hesitation, Gusain replied, "Wanak, the owner of Dades Agricultural Company, has a monopoly on the grain supply from the surrounding farms to Morora. He had become an experimental subject but suddenly escaped and now behaves like a normal person.
"He is the most dangerous one in Morora."
Can someone really return to normal after becoming an experimental subject? And the Church of Knowledge didn't do anything about Wanak leaving the experimental group? This is exactly what I need... Lumian thought to himself and nodded. "Who is the second most dangerous person in Morora?"
Gusain's smile remained unchanged as he answered, "They say it's me."

Chapter 799: Provocation

Lumian wasn't surprised that Gusain indirectly referred to himself as the second most dangerous person in Morora. Instead, he smiled and asked, "What have you done? I mean, what have you done in Morora?"

Gusain's smile faded as he spoke seriously.

"Organized uprisings.

"We're already in the City of Exiles. Why should we still accept the rule of the Church of Knowledge? We should unite and drive them out of Morora. Then, we'll make our own rules and govern ourselves!"

Ignoring other factors, your words do make some sense. But the issue is, if we overthrow the Church's rule, why stay in Morora? *Is this the influence of 0-01?* The residents of Morora never consider leaving the city... Fortunately, I have a false Angel rank and all sorts of random items, so I'm only somewhat reluctant to leave, not entirely devoid of such thoughts... Lumian first confirmed the abnormalities of Morora from Gusain's response, then understood why people considered Gusain the second most dangerous person in Morora.

Uprisings were something the Church of Knowledge wouldn't allow, and given the information on 0-01, Gusain must have organized multiple uprisings and still hadn't been caught and added to the experimental subjects!

This was enough to show that this gentleman-like mature man was not simple.

Seeing that Louis wasn't scared by his words and didn't show obvious resistance, Gusain extended an invitation, "Would you like to join our group?"

"I'll think about it," Lumian replied with a smile.

He really intended to consider it. This might be a way to approach 0-01 without becoming an experimental subject.

He believed that this ragtag group, unable to resist the influence of 0-01, couldn't truly overthrow the Church's rule in Morora, but he needed chaos and opportunity.

These exiles could die, and the Church of Knowledge personnel here seemed to be puppets.

Gusain smiled in satisfaction.

"Being a prisoner in this open-air prison or becoming its ruler, being perpetually oppressed or pursuing freedom, it indeed requires careful consideration."

With that, Gusain glanced at the other side of the small square and said, "I must take my leave now. If you decide, hang a red cloth,

the kind used to taunt bulls, at the door of the Carnivore bar."
With that, Gusain removed his hat, placed a hand on his chest, and bowed.
Watching him walk into a nearby alley at a leisurely pace, Lumian saw a group of black-robed enforcers hurrying from the opposite side of the small square.
"Did you see Gusain just now? He looks like a gentleman with a hat," the leader asked Lumian.
Lumian's smile widened, and he casually pointed to the alley Gusain had entered.
"Yes, he went that way."
The enforcers stared at Lumian for a couple of seconds before continuing to pursue Gusain.
Lumian raised his right hand, rubbed his chin, and murmured to himself, Gusain sensed the enforcers' arrival in advance, but I didn't...
Is that why he's managed to organize multiple uprisings without being caught?
Is it his ability, an item, or the special corruption from 0-01?
Lumian didn't linger in the small square, bidding farewell to Vijepan's corpse, and continued towards the possible location of the Abscessed Hand's head.
After turning into another street, he suddenly had a premonition and looked towards the edge of the city of Morora.
The ground shook violently, earth and stones surged up, swallowing several buildings and forming a mountain about ten meters high.
At the mountain's peak, thick dust mixed with smoke erupted, red lava flowed, emitting heat that Lumian could clearly feel even in the city center.
At the same time, the screams of humans from that direction echoed far and wide.
A volcanic eruption? Lumian was stunned.
He had thought the volcanic eruptions described in the 0-01 information came from the surrounding mountains, not from within the city on flat ground!
After a few seconds, the dust obscured the sky, plunging Morora back into darkness.
Passersby showed no extra reaction, merely covering their noses to block the dust, treating it as just another heavy rain.
Lumian shook his head as he watched.
In such living conditions, Gusain and his people hadn't thought of escaping, only planning to overthrow the Church's rule and replace it. No wonder this is a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact...

Lumian, who restored himself at six every morning, remained unafraid of the dust and resumed his steps.
He crossed the street and arrived at a square with multiple obelisks. In the dusty environment, he moved along the buildings around the square towards his destination.
Suddenly, he felt a resonance, a connection from his special powers.
Lumian quickly turned and looked at the classical building made of gray-white stones beside him.
At the top hung a large sign with words written in Lenburg: Dades Agricultural Company Below the sign, two glass windows suddenly opened, revealing a figure.
The figure, wearing a thin white shirt with the top two buttons undone despite the cold winter, had hair like it was stained with fresh blood, iron-black eyes, and sharp facial features, exuding a fierce aura.
No introduction was needed; Lumian identified the figure from the sign and the resonating aura.
The most dangerous criminal in Morora, former experimental subject Wanak!
Did the resonance just now come from the direct corruption of 0-01?
Did the law of convergence lead to this encounter?
Did Wanak escape the status of an experimental subject because he completely submitted to 0-01?
Is he now 0-01's proxy in Morora?
This Sealed Artifact, despite lacking wisdom, instinctively seeks opportunities to break free from its seal?
As Lumian's thoughts raced, the suspected Wanak suddenly transformed into a blazing-white flame spear, filled with destructive energy, and flew at him.
Lumian's figure instantly disappeared without reappearing.
He directly teleported closer to the Abscessed Hand's head. In his ears echoed the taunting voice of the suspected Wanak, "Coward! Chicken!"
Lumian snorted, not turning back to fight the man.
I'Ill first gather the Abscessed Hand's body!
He feared the intense battle might lead to unforeseen events, making contact with 0-01 before he collected all the body parts, resulting in uncontrollable consequences.
Moreover, the aura and the flame spear the suspected Wanak displayed suggested he might have a trace of godhood. Even if not truly Sequence 4, he had fundamentally differed from a Sequence 5 Beyonder.
Demigods couldn't approach 0-01, but maybe pseudo-demigod

proxies created by 0-01 weren't subject to this rule!
Lumian looked ahead, finding himself in the boundless cemetery behind the Church of Knowledge, surrounded by gravestones and trees.
Uh... Lumian was momentarily stunned, then felt it made sense.
The bar owner-cum-chef having half of the Abscessed Hand's body and using it was an anomaly. Normally, anyone, even a felon, encountering a rotting corpse split into multiple parts would first call the enforcers to clean up the scene. The enforcers would then bury the body in this cemetery as part of the seal.
Of course, this was a normal assumption, excluding those with a penchant for corpses.
Lumian moved forward, approaching the source of the subtle connection.
During this, he remembered something.
Madam Magician said dangerous things might happen once the Abscessed Hand's body is gathered. It's best to complete this step within the City of Exiles to offset the corresponding risks with the presence of 0-01...
If I get the Hand Bro's head later, does that count as gathering the body?
Will that cause dangerous events?
Maybe I should wait a bit longer? Wait for dangerous and difficult-to-handle situations before teleporting back to gather Hand Bro's body to create unknown risks and muddy the waters?
I can't face the dangers of the Hand Bro alone; sharing is caring...
Also, Madam Magician implied that the Hand Bro might break the seal and enter Morora once its body is gathered?
Otherwise, how could it be considered complete...
Normally, not even a messenger can be summoned, nor a contract creature...
This might help me escape Morora...
As Lumian pondered, he stopped at a recently filled pit without a tombstone.
His contract mark told him a part of the Abscessed Hand's body was in this pit.
Seeing the unusually fresh marks on the pit's surface, Lumian felt a tightness in his chest. He crouched down, extended his hands, and performed a directional blast.
With the rumbling sound of explosions, he blew away a large amount of soil and unearthed a black wooden box from the bottom of the pit.
Opening the box, Lumian saw a highly decomposed, blue-black, swollen ear and a folded white paper.

Lumian unfolded the paper, seeing words written in Intisian:
"As expected, you want this rotten head.
"But unfortunately, I got it before you went to the Carnivore bar and hid it.
"Maybe you can ask me for it.
"Albus Medici."

Chapter 800: New Waitress

Lumian admitted that he felt a bit provoked.

However, it was still acceptable. If his guess was right, he and Albus would eventually cross paths again regarding 0-01. It was better for the Abscessed Hand's head to be in Albus's possession than lost or hidden by some unknown person.

Lumian now regretted not acting against Albus at the Carnivore Bar. He had hesitated and wanted to use him.

At that time, it was hard to predict that Albus had already obtained the Abscessed Hand's head.

Silently, Lumian activated the black mark representing Spirit World Traversal, sensing the subtle connection between himself and the Abscessed Hand's body parts again.

He intended to use this to find Albus.

The feedback is all similar, no way to distinguish which is stronger, which might be Hand Bro's head... Did Albus do something to suppress the feedback? Or completely block it?

Lumian slowly exhaled, taking the Abscessed Hand's ear from the black wooden box and placing it in his Traveler's Bag.

He carefully examined the area around the grave, hoping to find clues to Albus's whereabouts.

Unfortunately, Albus was also an experienced Hunter, very adept at covering his tracks.

Containing his emotions, Lumian turned back to the Carnivore Bar amidst the dust and clouds from the volcanic eruption.

As he stepped through the door, Lez, the human cook, who had found some wood to repair the shelves and bar counter, stopped working, hammer in hand, and turned to him.

"I hired a waitress."

"You can decide on that yourself," Lumian said, uninterested in the bar's operation. He only cared about getting three meals and free lodging under the guise of being the boss.

Lez, ever diligent, added, "You know her. Julie, who came in with us."

The "collector"? Lumian almost choked on his own saliva.

Why would a man hire such a "collector" as a waitress?

Won't he feel a chill down there?

Before Lumian could ask Lez's reasoning, Julie descended from upstairs.

She had changed into a dark slit dress she found from somewhere, with her chest barely concealed under a thin veil.

Her previously dirty face was now clean, and her long brown hair was simply tied up, her features clear in Lumian's eyes.

Despite having been around two Demonesses for a long time, Lumian found himself impressed.
This female convict didn't look perverse or mad, with slender brown eyebrows and brown eyes that seemed to hold a gentle autumn water, her skin delicate and white, her demeanor gentle and elegant, contrasting sharply with her enticing figure.
She was a uniquely beautiful woman, exuding an allure beyond normal.
Like a Demoness... Lumian had to admit Julie's previous disguise with dirt and loose hair was quite effective.
Another case of the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence...
Lumian sighed, responding to Julie's tender, affectionate gaze, "Why do you want to be a waitress at my bar?"
"I need a job to support myself," Julie smiled gently, as if they were in some city instead of Morora.
Lumian suddenly changed the topic.
"Why do you like collecting that part of men?"
Julie's gentle brown eyes suddenly showed an indescribable madness.
She smiled and answered with a tone of longing, "I just want to reclaim what's mine."
Uh... another victim of the Demoness Sect? Now turned perpetrator...
She must have transformed from a man to a woman like Franca, but unlike Franca, she had severe psychological issues, resulting in her abnormal hobby? Lumian guessed while confirming that Julie was likely a Demoness, and not a low-level one, at least a Sequence 6 Demoness of Pleasure.
Lumian then murmured, Your way of digesting Pleasure is to rape men and then cut it off at the climax to make them experience the fall from heaven to hell?
That fits the nature of a Demoness of Pleasure, but it's too direct and brutal, lacking the beauty of self-struggle...
How did the Church of Knowledge send a Demoness here as an ordinary rapist-murderer?
Was it intentional?
Right, based on my current mysticism knowledge, each god's pathway top has one to three great beings holding all the sequence powers, like Mr. Fool, The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, the Great Mother, and the Mother Tree of Desire...
From this perspective, the Primordial Demoness-being adjacent to the Hunter pathway-trying to scheme 0-01 is understandable, perhaps inevitable. According to Madam Magician, 0-01 is the key to ascending to Red Priest and becoming the true god of the Hunter

pathway...
In this case, once the Demoness Sect discovers Morora, they will definitely send witches below the demigod level to infiltrate here...
Why didn't they send anyone before, waiting until Julie and I were exiled together?
Perhaps the Primordial Demoness's revelation told them only by following me could they enter Morora, given I was specially sent by the Church of Knowledge without any checks?
No, more likely, Julie isn't the first or even the second Demoness to infiltrate Morora. The previous ones didn't complete their mission and gradually lost contact with the Demoness Sect...
If that's true, the Demonesses controlling the mirror world have it easier than me using the Mirror Cufflink and Mirror Mark to connect with the outside. Julie must have a lot of accumulated intelligence and plans...
From her, I might find opportunities and ways to approach 0-01 and leave a mark...
With these thoughts, Lumian smiled at Julie, who still had a hint of madness in her eyes, "I don't care what you want to reclaim or why, but since you chose to be my bar's waitress, you must follow my rules. First, no harassing customers during business hours."
Julie looked a bit aggrieved but her eyes shone brightly, full of anticipation.
"What if they harass me?"
"Lez will throw them out. If they dare fight back, Lez knows how to cook them and will leave you the parts you want," Lumian said casually. "Or you can wait until the bar closes and find them yourself."
Julie licked her lips. "What's the second rule?"
"No harassing the boss." Lumian headed for the stairs to the second floor. "Lez will discuss your pay."
Julie seemed slightly disappointed. "I wanted to see if what I lost is with you."
Before Lumian could respond, she asked again, "Is it harassment if I invite you to view my collection?"
"Not interested," Lumian replied curtly.
He confirmed Julie's crimes weren't intentional to get exiled to Morora.
She had a genuine hobby, looking gentle and beautiful but twisted and mad inside.
After dark, Julie finished Lez's meticulously prepared dinner and praised it, "I've decided to seduce you last."
Her seduction was lethal.
Lez seemed a bit disappointed but sincerely asked, "If you're ever

killed, can I have your body?"
"Sure," Julie agreed nonchalantly, her movements graceful and smile reserved.
She then looked at Lumian, blinking. "Boss, the bar hasn't reopened. Can I go out tonight?"
"That's your freedom." Lumian drank some wheat ale to suppress the sudden restlessness inside him.
He was now sure Julie was a Demoness of Affliction, having just used Charm on him.
If she approached again, he planned to Cull her without mercy.
Only by intimidating this Demoness of Affliction with strength and ferocity could he keep her in check.
Julie wiped her mouth with a white napkin, stood up, and left the Carnivore Bar.
After a few seconds, Lumian vanished from the table.
He first teleported then turned into a shadow creature, silently following Julie.
Julie walked elegantly, approaching a square where exiles gathered, feigning drunkenness.
The exiles couldn't take their eyes off this Demoness. A muscular man eagerly approached and chatted with Julie.
Julie drunkenly waggled her finger.
"I want to duel you."
"Sure," the man said joyfully, helping Julie leave for his home.
The other exiles didn't react in time, losing sight of the two.
Lumian didn't lose track, hiding outside the man's window.
He heard Julie's kitten-like moans, unlike the rough madness he imagined.
With an Ascetic's endurance, Lumian showed no abnormality until the man shouted loudly, nearing climax.
The next second, a piercing scream of intense pain erupted from the room.
Soon, Julie emerged, face flushed, eyes bright, her beauty overwhelming.
She held a bloody object, freezing it in crystal-clear ice, placing it in a small bag.
Lumian continued following Julie, who didn't attempt any counter-surveillance, arriving at the large square outside the Church of Knowledge.
She seemed to be waiting for something.
After a while, a team of black-robed enforcers emerged from the church, led by a tall, fair-skinned, restrained, beautiful woman.
Julie's eyes lit up, her face glowing with joy.
She approached the enforcers excitedly, shouting at the leader,

"Celeste!
The tall woman in the black robe glanced at Julie indifferently, asking emotionlessly, "Who are you?"
Julie's expression froze.

Chapter 801: Pretending

Seeing Julie remain silent, the black-robed female enforcer led her team across the square, continuing their patrol of Morora.

Julie stood there, staring at her back, as if turned to stone.

Hidden in the shadows, Lumian watched silently, musing to himself, An old lover?

That enforcer had a certain Demoness-like charm...

Was she the last Demoness to infiltrate Morora, Julie's lover, but ultimately became an experimental subject and forgot her past?

Yes, the Knowledge Cathedral's Heraberg mentioned that in Morora, the past isn't important, only the present and future matter. Is this implying that after becoming an experimental subject or spending enough time here, ties to the past will gradually disappear, even memories can't be retained?

This is somewhat like the people who disappeared in the Trier's catacombs, who were forgotten by everyone who knew them, but the effect is opposite and not as strong...

Lumian felt he understood Julie's emotions better now.

She might have willingly taken on the task of infiltrating Morora, hoping to find and rescue her lover, only to discover her lover had completely forgotten her, not betraying her but simply not remembering who she is...

Besides the two untainted Demonesses around me, there's actually another who believes in true love... Julie must have another purpose in seeking Celeste, confirming her situation, obtaining untransmitted information, and perhaps items prepared for seizing 0-01... Lumian seriously considered the feasibility of attacking the enforcers without facing punitive consequences.

After a while, Julie trudged back towards the Carnivore bar, her face plain and her expression sorrowful, like a white Jimsonweed swaying gently in the cold night wind.

Lumian stayed vigilant, following Julie until she reached the Carnivore bar before reappearing in his room using the shadows.

A while later, lying in bed listening to the wind, Lumian's thoughts wandered aimlessly.

Suddenly, he opened his eyes, noticing a troubling detail.

Having become an experimental subject, Celeste's reaction just now was wrong!

From previous tests, Lumian knew the enforcers strangely recognized every resident of Morora. Celeste should have asked "Who are you calling?" or "What do you want?" instead of "Who are you?"

Whether in a normal state or not, she most likely still recognized

Julie but pretended not to.
Lumian sat up, narrowing his eyes.
ls Celeste not a complete experimental subject yet?
Is she pretending not to recognize Julie to protect her or to keep her secrets safe, ensuring the plan continues?
What is she using to maintain some clarity and self-awareness, not becoming a complete puppet-like experimental subject?
Is it something the Demoness Sect prepared based on previous infiltrators' experiences, or has Celeste had some fortuitous encounter, discovering part of the secret?
Lumian decided it was necessary to "contact" Celeste.
Of course, he would first see if Celeste would secretly approach Julie.
...
In Trier's arts district, Franca waited outside an art gallery, as agreed, for the Demoness of Black.
Before long, a four-seater carriage pulled up, and Clarice, wearing a black hat and thin veil over a dark court dress, looked out from the window and nodded at her.
Franca opened the door, stepped lightly up, and sat opposite her.
As the carriage moved slowly through the bustling city, she smiled at the Demoness of Black.
"Madame, I've ascended to Affliction."
"Faster than I expected," Clarice said, her doubt evident.
Franca smiled slyly. "Because Ciel became a Reaper."
"He's Sequence 5 too? His advancement seems even quicker than yours..." Clarice slightly raised her head, her eyes seeming to shift. "After Gardner Martin's death, he should have left the Iron and Blood Cross Order, right?"
Franca spoke the absolute truth.
"Yes, he used Gardner Martin's Beyonder characteristics to concoct the potion, so he owes him for the quick advancement."
The Demoness of Black smiled in understanding, her demeanor much warmer than usual.
"Even in death, Gardner Martin helps you."
That was a hell of a joke... Franca felt slightly awkward.
She quickly changed the subject.
"Madame, you said you'd tell me some secrets of the sect once I became a Demoness of Affliction."
Clarice, with a slight smile behind her thin black veil, replied, "Yes, you're now considered a core member of our sect. Hmm, where should I start..."
Seeing the Demoness of Black unconsciously reveal a hint of innocent girlishness, Franca couldn't help but be momentarily

moved, marveling at the high-level Demoness's overwhelming charm.
After a few seconds, Clarice's expression turned serious and a bit melancholic as she began, "I'll start with the specifics of our sect.
"We originally were a family, all members descendants of the Primordial One, but since the Fifth Epoch, such an organizational structure couldn't sustain our influence. We began to incorporate Beyonders of the Assassin pathway who also believed in the Primordial One as members."
"Are you also a descendant of the Primordial One?" Franca, having learned this from the Tarot Club, still showed appropriate surprise and curiosity.
This was a performance learned from Jenna, honed with a Spectator's feedback.
The Demoness of Black nodded slightly.
"My mother is a descendant of the Primordial One."
Wait, according to our deductions, you should have Sauron and Tamara blood... Does this mean your mother was of Primordial One and Tamara bloodlines? Franca hesitated, then pitifully asked, "Does that mean I can never join the brass in the sect? I'm not a descendant of the Primordial One..."
"It doesn't matter. You can marry a descendant, and your spouse will count as a family member," Clarice smiled again. "Moreover, in the future, you might truly become a child of the Primordial One. We are always getting closer to the Primordial One."
"What do you mean?" Franca expressed her confusion.
She felt a sudden inexplicable fear.
"You'll understand in time," the Demoness of Black did not elaborate.
I hate people who speak unclearly... Franca silently grumbled, waiting for the Demoness of Black to continue.
Clarice returned to the previous topic.
"After the Pale-White War, the Primordial One fell into slumber, occasionally waking. All sect affairs are handled by high-ranking Demonesses titled by color. Currently, there are thirteen, including myself, some of whom are Angels, others powerful Saints."
"Is there a pope, a pontiff, or a matriarch?" Franca asked.
Clarice nodded.
"Yes, the Primordial One's child, our Matriarch, the Demoness of Gray.
She likes to be called the Saintess of Gray."
"The Primordial One's child... What is Her relation to Krismona? Browns told me Krismona is also a child of the Primordial One," Franca openly expressed her curiosity.

The Demoness of Black replied emotionlessly, "They are twins, but our Matriarch was born as a male Sequence 9 and later became a Demoness."
Twins... It seems the Demoness of Gray might know some secrets of the Krismona Night Pillar... Franca felt a strange sense of history merging with reality.
The Demoness of Gray must have witnessed the Fourth Epoch.
Clarice continued, "Each high-ranking Demoness titled by color handles specific affairs, directly reporting to our Matriarch. They do not have clear subordination among themselves, and we sometimes receive revelations from the Primordial One, allowing us considerable autonomy.
"I came to Trier to manage sect members here, maintain contact with local collaborators, and clean up the Mirror People."
Franca seized the opportunity to ask, "Is our approach to the Mirror People complete eradication? No intention to use them?"
The Demoness of Black smiled sadly. "How do you plan to use them?"
If I knew, why would I ask you? Franca awkwardly smiled. "To help us control that special mirror world. I think it's quite useful."
The Demoness of Black glanced at Franca, her eyes shimmering, and laughed softly.
"Why do you think we haven't mastered that special mirror world?"
"Uh..." Franca was genuinely confused.
It wasn't an act.
The Demoness of Black resumed her melancholy, elegant demeanor, smiling faintly.
"All mirror worlds are under our Demoness control. That special mirror world was originally used to fight the Primordial One, but ultimately, the Primordial One took control of it.
"Of course, after the War of the Four Emperors, we lost partial control of that special mirror world. After the Pale-White War, we could only exert limited influence."
"Why?" Franca felt there must be a significant secret.
The Demoness of Black smiled.
"Perhaps the Matriarch and other high-ranking Demonesses who survived the Fourth Epoch know, but not me.
"From the Mirror People's state and their confessions, I guess the Primordial One's projection in the mirror experienced some changes or, the Primordial One's projection separated part of Her characteristics, affected by the Fourth Epoch Trier's seal, unable to return, unable to reunite with the Primordial One.
"But this doesn't explain why we lost further control after the Pale-

White War. Fourth Epoch Trier's seal hasn't strengthened.
"Moreover, a true god is unique."

Chapter 802: The Most Special Point

A true god is unique... *What does that mean?* Is it impossible for another Primordial Demoness to exist, whether in a mirror or a painting? Franca pondered over the Demoness of Black's final words, sensing they held critical mysticism knowledge.

As for Clarice's speculation about the Primordial Demoness's projection in the mirror undergoing some changes, Franca had thought the same before. When the Demoness of Black obtained the black Primordial Demoness figurine, she had nonchalantly mentioned, "The Mirror People believe in the mirrored Primordial One, but it's actually just a projection of the Primordial One in the mirror." She didn't explain further, and at that time, Franca had already guessed that perhaps the projection had undergone some changes.

But the problem was that if one continued this line of reasoning, it could explain why the Demonesses lost further control over the special mirror world after the Pale-White War. According to Franca's limited knowledge, in the Pale Disaster, Death fell, and the Primordial Demoness was heavily injured. Such a weakened Primordial Demoness couldn't prevent the projection in the mirror from changing further, thus losing control over that special mirror world and failing to recover from the injuries for millennia.

Franca thought that if she, with her limited understanding of the Pale Disaster, could come to such a conclusion, the Demoness of Black wouldn't say it couldn't be explained. Unless she was completely unaware of the outcomes of the Pale Disaster or had already obtained other strong evidence that ruled out the possibility that the Primordial Demoness's injuries during the divine war led to the Demonesses' further loss of control over the special mirror world.

After some thought, Franca carefully asked, "Is the black figurine I handed over evidence of the Primordial One's projection changing in the mirror?"

The Demoness of Black neither nodded nor shook her head. Instead, she explained mysticism, "Our Assassin pathway's most unique node is Sequence 7, Witch. This isn't just because it changes our gender but also because it leaves a strong, distinct imprint in the mirror world. This imprint is what allows us to use mirror magic."

This is about the Mirror Person for each Demoness... Franca suddenly had an epiphany and took the opportunity to say, "Previously, Moran Avigny said the one in the mirror is our true self, our exiled and sealed self..."

Clarice shook her head with a hint of melancholy.
"I believe Moran Avigny didn't lie to you. The Mirror People indeed believe they are the true selves, but can you completely trust conclusions made from their own perspective?
"Have you ever forgotten your past self, that indelible pain?"
"No," Franca answered sincerely, "I often think back to my past self and life, imagining if I hadn't chosen the Assassin potion, would things have turned out differently."
The Demoness of Black nodded sympathetically.
"We still remember, we haven't forgotten, so it's impossible for our true self to be exiled. If one day, we no longer feel pain from our losses, forget the past, and immerse ourselves in the present state, the strong imprint we left in the mirror might activate in a mystical sense, leading to cognitive confusion and gradual loss of control.
"In this regard, having once been male and constantly reminiscing about our male self is a major advantage in maintaining our identity and avoiding loss of control."
"Then purely female Demonesses must be very dangerous?" Franca feigned sudden realization; in truth, she was worried about Jenna.
"There won't be purely female Demonesses," Clarice coldly replied.
If you encountered one, you would kill her? Without the sacrificial square in the catacombs, Jenna would have lost control and died when ascending to Witch... Franca didn't delve further, fearing to arouse the Demoness of Black's suspicion.
Clarice continued, "Aside from the product of the special mirror world, everyone has a Mirror Person. Each time we look into a mirror, a Mirror Person is created. For non-Demoness pathway individuals, these Mirror People are temporary projections, quickly dissipating after the person leaves the mirror.
"But we Demonesses are different. The strong imprint creates a Mirror Person that always exists and grows stronger as we advance in Sequence. At the divine stage, because a true god is unique, the imprint returns to the body, merging with the self. From then on, one exists both in reality and in the mirror, embodying both states."
There's some similarity to what Moran Avigny said. The Demoness of Black didn't deny our strong imprint in the mirror could be called Mirror People... Both their words likely contain parts of the truth but not the whole truth. Perhaps piecing them together could reveal some reliable facts... Franca nodded thoughtfully. "So the appearance of the black figurine is abnormal. It should have merged with the self?"
"That's why we suspect the Primordial One lost part of Her

characteristics, causing changes in the mirror projection," Clarice confirmed Franca's statement.
But according to this logic, the white figurines each sect member carries shouldn't exist either... The Primordial Demoness, also known as the Chaos Demoness, shouldn't be purely black or white. Unless the white and black figurines represent something other than the real and mirror selves... Franca didn't dare voice these emerging thoughts.
The Demoness of Black further explained, "Black figurines are rare. Not every special Mirror Person has one, not even someone as significant as Moran Avigny.
"Which specific ones possess it is currently unknown."
That's right... Franca felt a pang of regret for not asking Moran Avigny about the black Primordial Demoness figurine back then.
She and Lumian had previously thought it didn't warrant further investigation: wasn't it just a special entity the Mirror People worshiped?
Asking directly for the deity's honorific name and related information seemed enough, with no need to focus on the figurine's origin...
Franca showed her frustration, then tentatively asked, "Shouldn't we be trying to destroy the Fourth Epoch Trier's seal to lift the restrictions on that special mirror world, letting the Primordial One regain control and complete the fusion?
"Why are we still cleaning up Mirror People?"
The Demoness of Black replied seriously, "Opening it ourselves and them opening it are completely different."
Which one dominates the white or black figurines? Franca, a voracious reader and imaginative transmigrator, had a vivid imagination.
The Demoness of Black didn't give her a chance to ask further.
"What we need to do now is clean up the Mirror People in Trier, disrupt their plans, and, if possible, collect vital information from the deepest Darts of the special mirror world."
Yes, Madame," Franca seized the moment to request, "I'm tracking a Mirror Person and need items that can traverse the mirror world and send messages through mirrors. My Mirror Cufflink is running out of uses," Demoness of Black Clarice nodded lightly.
"Alright, I'll prepare it for you."
She paused for a moment before adding, "Remember, the mirror world is both mysterious and dangerous. It is also a source of our strength as Demonesses. Don't resist approaching it, but don't underestimate it either.
"Compared to the Hunter pathway, the mirror world is our most

unique feature."
The most unique feature... Franca suddenly felt that the Demoness of Black was hinting at the mirror world's importance far beyond what she imagined.
After exchanging more mysticism knowledge about the sect and the Assassin pathway, Franca asked one last question, "Madame, can the Plague of an Affliction Witch expand the types of pathogens?"
"What do you mean?" The Demoness of Black frowned slightly, evoking pity.
"I mean, can we find special pathogens and incorporate them into our Plague ability? Simple illnesses like pneumonia, strokes, and heart attacks are powerful but lack imagination. I remember some pathogens cause narcolepsy or complete muscle weakness..." Franca elaborated on her idea.
The Demoness of Black was silent for several seconds before saying, "When you become a Demoness of Despair, you can create mystical pathogens with different effects. For now, the range of Plague is fixed by the Beyonder characteristics unless..."
"Unless what?" Franca asked curiously.
The Demoness of Black spoke with longing and admiration, "Unless the Primordial One modifies the scope of Plague as a true god of the Demoness pathway."
So that's possible? This is what being a deity means, influencing one's pathway... Franca was genuinely shocked, realizing the true meaning of the word "true god."
...
Morora, in the Carnivore bar.
Lumian lay on the bed, eyes closed, appearing asleep but actually closely monitoring Julie's movements.
He suspected that Celeste, the seemingly fully converted experimental subject, might secretly visit Julie at night to share vital information about Morora.
As the night deepened, Lumian felt a sudden restlessness, as if the air was filled with amorous energy.
His mind couldn't help but recall scenes of temptation he'd witnessed before.

Chapter 803: Transmitting Information

Similar experiences were not new to Lumian; he had felt this way before.

Whenever Franca prayed to the Primordial Demoness figurine made of bone, Lumian would sometimes be nearby. Even through doors and walls, through the wall of spirituality, he couldn't help but feel sensations.

Is Julie praying to the Primordial Demoness figurine? Lumian, still with his eyes closed, made a guess about the current situation.

It wasn't necessarily due to Julie's extreme piety; it was a daily ritual for members of the Demoness Sect. Even a believer of Mr. Fool, like Franca, had to do it regularly.

Before long, the amorous energy in the air dissipated, and Lumian's state returned to normal.

Suddenly, he remembered something: *Where did Julie get a Primordial Demoness figurine?*

During the exile to Morora, Lumian noticed that neither Lez nor Julie seemed to carry personal belongings. This meant that, except for Lumian, who had special treatment and wasn't searched, all other exiles were handled by the standard procedure.

So, Julie shouldn't have a standard-issue figurine from the Demoness sect. Even if she wanted to make one herself, she would need to buy materials and set up a ritual, and Lumian's tracking today showed she hadn't done any preparations.

So, where did her Primordial Demoness figurine come from? Or did she directly use the language that can invoke natural forces to recite the Primordial Demoness's honorific name? But if that were the case, the influence of the power overflow on me would be too weak. Even if it was not as strong as the residual divine power Franca experienced, it shouldn't be just a bit of restlessness...

Lumian became extremely alert.

He quickly had a hypothesis.

Celeste had visited!

It must have been this Demoness, who had become an experimental subject, who gave Julie the Primordial Demoness figurine or something similar!

Why didn't I notice?

II was monitoring the room Julie was in all along...

With that thought, Lumian suddenly sat up and looked at the full-length mirror in his bedroom.

Yes!

Celeste must have come through the mirror world!

She must have communicated with Julie through the mirror,

which is why I didn't detect anything unusual until Julie started praying!
It's normal for the Demoness Sect to have items like the Mirror Cufflink!
Silently, Lumian got out of bed and walked to the full-length mirror in his room.
He felt it was time to use the Mirror Cufflink.
He put on the glass-like cufflink and pressed his hand against the mirror surface.
The button-like accessory lit up with a faint glow, and Lumian's figure immediately penetrated the mirror's surface, entering the deep, dark mirror world.
Before the dark, web-like tunnels spread out before him, Lumian clearly sensed the three mirror imprints he had left in the outside world and the few he had set up in Julie's and Lez's rooms.
He didn't rush to the mirror in Julie's room. Instead, he took out an unfinished letter from the Traveler's Bag.
It was a letter to Franca, Jenna, and Anthony.
Lumian then activated the black mark on his right shoulder, attempting to teleport to the full-length mirror in Franca and Jenna's apartment.
It felt distant and had an invisible barrier. Even if he penetrated the barrier, there was a vast, silent void of darkness that Lumian instinctively believed contained indescribable danger and terror.
Does this represent that special mirror world?
To leave Morora and return to the outside world, I must pass through it?
Even Angels would find it dangerous...
With these thoughts, Lumian stretched out his right hand, holding the letter, using the already activated Mirror Cufflink to give the paper a reflective, glass-like hue, and sent it out.
The light stuck to the invisible barrier's surface, slowly permeating it, falling into the dead silence, and heading toward the distant target mirror.
It works... Lumian breathed a sigh of relief and used the contracted ability of Spirit World Traversal to shift to the mirror in Julie's room.
The mirror was pitch black with no traces left.
Lumian sniffed slightly, catching a lingering scent.
It smelled like a human hormone, coupled with the influence of mystical power, faintly sweet, amorous, and warm.
Not Julie's scent... Lumian nodded slightly. Celeste indeed visited.
Now the question was, did Celeste use an item to traverse the mirror world and reach Julie's room, an item that escaped the

Church of Knowledge's search, or did she use the special connection of the mirror world to send it through a ritual?
Or, did she conduct a ritual to ask the Primordial Demoness for it?
Or is she no longer the original Celeste but her corresponding special Mirror Person? This could explain why she retained some self-awareness after becoming an experimental subject, but it's not the only explanation...
Lumian, an experienced handler of mystical events with much knowledge, naturally linked it to the special Mirror People.
He didn't peek into Julie's current situation through the mirror, fearing Celeste had given Julie some mirror-related items, making her more sensitive to the gaze from the mirror.
Moreover, Julie had just finished praying, and the Primordial Demoness figurine's residual effects lingered. Lumian didn't know if this would affect his spying.
Of course, he could roughly guess what Julie was doing.
Because he could hear Julie's suppressed, soft moans through the mirror.
Lovers reunited, getting what they wanted, relaxing and celebrating. Yes, and the sensations brought by praying to the Primordial Demoness figurine. She hasn't gone out to add to her collection, which is already quite restrained. Lumian silently chuckled.
He teleported back to his bedroom mirror, stepped out of the glass surface, and lay back on the bed.
...
Trier.
Lonely, empty, cold... Franca, used to go early to bed and early to rise, sighed, lying in bed, unable to sleep.
She felt she needed a few more days to adapt.
At this moment, she sensed something, sat up, walked out of the room, and went to the living room.
She looked at the full-length mirror in the living room and saw a water-like light wave on the glass surface, reflecting a neatly folded letter.
Is it from Lumian or the Demoness of Black? Franca walked over and pressed her hand against the mirror's surface.
Her right hand felt slightly cold, as if penetrating a lake mixed with ice, touching the now ethereal, intangible paper.
The paper quickly "dispersed," forming lines of Intisian words on the mirror surface: "I have arrived in Morora..."
Lumian briefly described his experiences and the results of the experiment but didn't mention the specific situation in Morora.
It was a kind of corruption!

A corruption Franca and the others might not withstand!
At the end of the letter, Lumian reminded: "I've already told my messenger and Madame Hela that if anyone writes to me but can't find me, they should send it to you to handle. Yes, I'm talking about you, Franca. Now you temporarily have a messenger."
Dammit, he still has to mock me in the end! Franca cursed in a mix of anger and amusement, grinding her teeth.
She thought for a moment and began writing a reply: "Nothing much to say, just a reminder: The Demoness of Black told me that Demonesses with color titles occasionally receive revelations from the Primordial One and have strong autonomy. If they are like this, won't the Demonesses of Affliction sent to Morora for important tasks also receive revelations, or even some divine power from the figurine?
"You should take this issue seriously. Also, it's time to test your Ascetic endurance. If you get bewitched and lose your manhood, even if it grows back every morning, I'll laugh at you for the rest of your life."
After finishing, Franca folded the paper and took out a rectangular amulet from the Traveler's Bag that looked like it was made of ice.
The amulet was entirely transparent, with patterns and motifs like bubbles inside, flowing and gathering continuously.
It was the Ice Amulet given to Franca by the Demoness of Black, allowing seven traversals through the mirror world or fourteen transmissions of information.
Franca put on the amulet, held the letter, and returned to the full-length mirror.
With a flash of cold light, she pressed the letter into the mirror surface, letting it fall toward the place the previous message came from.
...
Morora.
After reading the letter on the mirror's surface, Lumian lay back on the bed again.
He anticipated possible surprises.
Like Wanak, the owner of Dades Agricultural Company, coming to kill him at night.
This most dangerous criminal in Morora should soon figure out who the exile he confronted in the afternoon was. He must already know that Lumian killed the Carnivore bar owner and took over the place.
Given his attitude, he couldn't wait to kill Lumian on the spot. Now that he had identified his target and locked in his whereabouts, he would act quickly.

Lumian hadn't slept all night, only pretending to, not just to monitor Julie but also for this reason.
Now, he hoped Wanak would come soon. Then, he would teleport away, leaving Julie, the Demoness, for Wanak, letting them have an intense duel. That way, he could see what cards Julie had, what items she got from Celeste, and whether Wanak could further use the power of 0-01.
To Lumian's disappointment, Wanak didn't show up all night.
Is there a need to be this cautious? Just come straight here... Lumian muttered, getting out of bed and heading downstairs.
Chef Lez was already up, preparing breakfast with the kitchen ingredients.
"We can resume operations by noon today," Lez said, glancing at Lumian. "But we don't have any beef, lamb, or pork in stock."
"I'll give you some startup funds," Lumian replied, just about to leave the kitchen when he suddenly heard Julie's footsteps coming down the stairs.
An idea crossed his mind, and he casually said to Lez, "By the way, let me tell you about a few people you need to be cautious of. Whatever you do, don't provoke them.
"First, there's Wanak, the owner of Dades Agricultural Company..."
Lumian relayed all of Gusain's warnings to Lez and then added, "And another one, named Albus Medici..."
As soon as he mentioned the name, Lumian heard Julie's footsteps pause momentarily.

Chapter 804: Consultation

"He might not use that name in Morora. I knew him before and saw him again yesterday when he came to the bar to duel with the owner. He has red hair. In Morora, anyone with red hair, no matter the shade, is trouble..." Lumian described Albus Medici's appearance in detail.

Chef Lez nodded. "I'll keep that in mind."

"Are you sure? Do you need me to sketch them for you?" Lumian asked earnestly.

He wasn't just asking Lez but also Julie, who was coming down the stairs slowly.

He wanted to give the Demoness something to focus on, hoping she'd be aware of Wanak and Albus Medici soon enough, letting trouble collide with trouble to see who was the bigger problem.

Lez shook his head slowly. "No need. I'll remember them like different ingredients with distinct features."

"Different ingredients, like a turkey?" Lumian imagined Albus Medici looking like a turkey and laughed.

He then handed Lez 200 sassen gold coins to restock the bar with meat and drinks.

As he turned to leave the kitchen, he saw Julie reaching the bottom of the stairs.

The Demoness had changed into fresh, clean clothes-an elegant white blouse paired with an ankle-length green skirt, highlighting her gentle and graceful demeanor.

Lumian suddenly recalled the sounds he heard last night, which contrasted sharply with Julie's current serene appearance.

His mouth went dry.

Dammit, this Demoness is subtly using Charm on me! It was normal to react, but this strong reaction wasn't right for an Ascetic like Lumian.

He looked at Julie and raised an eyebrow. "Do you remember the second rule of the bar?"

Julie, looking more radiant than yesterday, seemed to glow with inner joy.

Lumian felt an urge to rub his forehead.

Hey gal, are you really not worried about exposing that Celeste visited you last night?

Although you don't know that I witnessed you sprinting to Celeste yesterday and suffered a huge blow...

Julie smiled gently. "Don't harass the boss."

"You were Charming me just now," Lumian stated flatly.

Julie shrank back, feigning fear. "What... what are you going to do

to punish me?"
She acted scared but her eyes sparkled with amusement, as if she was teasing Lumian.
Lumian sighed, half-genuine, half-deliberate. "First-time offense can be forgiven. But don't let it happen again, or else..."
He didn't finish the sentence, leaving an ominous silence.
"Yes, boss!" Julie beamed.
She glanced at the door.
"The bar won't open until noon. Can I go out for a bit?"
"Sure," Lumian teased. "Planning to add to your collection? Do you have a morning exercise routine?"
"No," Julie shook her head lightly. "Just want to explore the city more."
As she left the bar, Lumian immediately teleported ahead, transforming into a shadow creature to follow her.
But Julie vanished.
Invisibility, then wiped her tracks, and did anti-divination? Lumian emerged from the shadows, frowning slightly.
This meant what Julie was doing this morning was very important. She didn't want anyone to know!
Also, having finally met her lover and found solace, she was more professional now, unlike her near-breakdown last night.
This was the normal behavior of a Sequence 5 Demoness of Affliction.
Lumian wasn't too disappointed. At least Julie now knew about Wanak and Albus Medici.
Following the nearest path, he walked towards the cemetery but didn't dig any graves or sneak underground. Instead, he went straight into the library-like Knowledge Cathedral.
Today, he was not merely tracking Julie. His main goal was to visit Archbishop Heraberg of Morora.
The title of Morora's Archbishop was Lumian's creation. After all, this puppet-like clergy member of the Church of Knowledge claimed to oversee all theological affairs in Morora.
Lumian felt that since the Church of Knowledge had 'recommended' him into Morora without confiscating his mystical items, direct inquiry about the underground mausoleum might be surprisingly effective rather than probing indirectly.
This was also a test. Lumian wanted to see if the sealing information about 0-01 was given only to him or distributed to all eligible individuals.
Did the Church of Knowledge place its bet solely on him, or did it hedge its bets across multiple candidates?
Inside the radiant holy cathedral, Lumian found Heraberg, with

his graying hair, kind eyes, and white robe with brass embroidery, standing by a brass bookshelf, quietly reading a thick book.
"Archbishop," Lumian called tentatively.
Heraberg looked up and asked warmly, "What puzzles you?"
Lumian chose his words carefully.
"If I want to enter the cemetery's underground section to find something, how can I avoid the dangers?"
Heraberg smiled and pointed to the brass bookshelf beside him.
"This one, this one, and this one... read them all thoroughly."
Lumian followed his gesture, mentally noting the book titles:
"Morora Residents' Code,"
"Doll Crafting and Maintenance,"
"Examples of Mausoleum Construction,"
"Principles of Sealing"...
What use is this for a Hunter like me? I'm not a Reader who can wield knowledge directly. Does this mean that by absorbing the knowledge in these books, I can grasp the layout of the underground mausoleum, understand the sealing mechanisms, and find a way to leave my mark on 0-01? Lumian thought deeply as he withdrew his gaze.
Heraberg continued, "Once you've read those, complete these test papers. You must score perfectly on each one."
Lumian looked at the stack of test papers filling a shelf. His forehead twitched, recalling some unpleasant memories.
He maintained a neutral expression, confirming, "So, once I finish reading and acing these tests, I can avoid the underground dangers?"
Heraberg pointed to another brass bookshelf.
"That one, that one, and that one. Master all the knowledge on those shelves, and you'll be well-prepared."
Three shelves? Lumian's lips twitched slightly.
That's about two or three hundred books, plus thousands of test papers, right?
Heraberg smiled and sighed. "Remember, knowledge equals power, and knowledge equals wealth. All the answers you seek lie within."
Lumian's expression shifted as he bit his lip and said, "I'll start with these."
He pulled out the initial books Heraberg pointed out.
Heraberg nodded approvingly.
"A Hunter who learns and pursues knowledge is the most powerful Hunter.
"It's been years since another Hunter came to me, willing to patiently read the designated books. The others, with red or thick hair, won't even step into the Holy Temple of Knowledge, let alone

approach these bookshelves."
It's because Aurore instilled a reading habit in me from a young age...
Lumian thought, feeling a pang of sadness.
He placed the books into his Traveler's Bag, bid farewell to Heraberg, and walked towards the Knowledge Cathedral's entrance.
Along the way, he saw a familiar figure-Guei, who had been exiled to Morora with him.
The scholarly-looking Guei, now dressed in thick, cotton clothing, stood by a brass bookshelf, engrossed in a book by the light of the stained glass window.
After a few seconds, Lumian walked over, smiling. "What a coincidence. Why are you here reading?"
Guei smiled faintly. "Didn't I tell you yesterday? I regret not knowing enough. Now, with such a vast library, how could I pass up the chance to learn? What brings you here?"
"To ask if it's too late to convert to the God of Knowledge and Wisdom," Lumian joked, then changed the topic. "Have you found a job yet?"
"Not yet," Guei shook his head. "I don't want to work on a farm or in a factory as some exile's slave. I'm planning to study for a while. Fortunately, I had some luck yesterday and earned some money, so I don't have to worry about going hungry."
Lumian chatted with Guei for a bit before waving goodbye to the secretive serial killer and returning to the Carnivore bar. He found a spot by the window and began reading the borrowed books in a comfortable position.
Morora's sunlight alternated between bright and hidden by storm clouds, but it didn't affect Lumian's reading as he had his radiant fireball lamp.
Near noon, Julie returned, her steps light, her face smiling, exuding a charm that even made Chef Lez steal a few glances at her.
Julie gave Lumian a curious look. "You're reading?"
"Not much else to do," Lumian replied casually.
Julie had no interest in the books; she withdrew her gaze and went upstairs, likely looking for waitress attire.
Lumian clicked his tongue silently.
Really, knowledge is power, and knowledge is wealth. Aren't you curious about what I'm reading?
Lez approached and said, "Boss, lunch is ready."
Lumian nodded, put away the books, and stood up.
He thought for a moment and said to Lez, "Find a red cloth and

hang it at the door."

Chapter 805: Test

Lez didn't ask why. He went upstairs, found a piece of red cloth, and hung it at the entrance of the Carnivore bar.

Lumian then sat at the newly rebuilt bar, enjoying the spiced, marinated roast beef with soft, delicious bread.

As time passed, more and more customers entered the Carnivore bar.

Lez had put up a wooden stand outside with a new menu and corresponding prices.

Of course, this wasn't the main reason for the influx of customers.

The primary reason was the incredibly low prices on the menu. After all, there was no owner to take a cut.

The customers came in with a sense of skepticism. They didn't have much faith in the bar under new ownership, repeatedly checking if the prices were real, if there were any hidden costs, and if the portions and quality of the food were as advertised.

This skepticism stemmed from being frequently deceived by Morora's unscrupulous merchants.

Those merchants had a point, though: "We've been exiled here for serious crimes. You can't expect us to run honest businesses, can you? Besides, the Morora Resident Code doesn't prohibit false pricing or inferior goods, and the enforcers won't check the kitchen's hygiene."

Most customers were angry but helpless. Those merchants they could deal with had already been eliminated. The remaining ones were too powerful to confront.

They often regretted not keeping a few manageable merchants around to ensure food quality and fair pricing through regular supervision.

Sometimes, killing wasn't the best solution.

"If I had understood that, I wouldn't have been exiled to Morora!" A man in his forties voiced his opinion while holding a beer with white foam.

His gaze kept shifting to Julie, temporarily acting as the bartender, hoping to catch her attention with his words and demeanor.

Low prices drew them in, but the pretty bartender made them stay for another drink.

Lumian forked a piece of perfectly roasted beef, savoring the combination of Lez's secret spices and the tender meat.

He wondered if, after leaving Morora, he should have Ludwig become a head chef.

Can't waste a Chef's talent!

After finishing lunch, Lumian took a glass of strong liquor and

walked around the hall as the bar owner, piecing together the current situation in Morora from different customers.
Not long after the establishment of this City of Exiles, a class division emerged, mainly based on power.
Today, the Beyonders firmly controlled all key positions in Morora, holding the resources like food, meat, vegetables, dairy products, various minerals, factory goods, sales channels, and street shops. Ordinary criminals without supernatural powers could only serve them, working on farms, in mines, ranches, factories, etc. The better-off were employees; the worse-off were nearly slaves.
For these ordinary criminals, the ultimate dream was to gain the trust of a powerful Beyonder and receive unwanted Beyonder characteristics as rewards after a duel.
This is exactly what the Iron and Blood Cross Order dreamed of, Lumian mused with a chuckle after returning to his seat at the bar.
As a former member of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, he often mocked the awkward "preaching" and "rituals," but it helped him grasp the core ideology of the Iron and Blood Cross Order:
They wanted to establish a world where Beyonders no longer hid but gained status through power.
Morora seemed to embody this vision.
Lumian was about to finish his drink and find a quiet place upstairs to study when he noticed Gusain, the gentleman, entering the bar.
You came quickly... Someone's been watching this place? Lumian played with his glass.
Gusain sat beside him, removed his top hat, and addressed Julie, who wore a white blouse, black vest, and a dark tie with a unique charm, "A Lanti Proof."
In Morora, the most popular drinks were rye beer, Lanti Proof, and red wine.
Lumian took out paper and pen from his Traveler's Bag and started sketching on the bar counter.
Gusain waited until Julie handed him the Lanti Proof, took a sip, and then smiled ahead.
"You made your decision faster than I expected."
"I don't want to be tied down like this," Lumian replied with a hidden meaning-his true intention was that he didn't want to stay in Morora long, while Gusain interpreted it as him not wanting to remain under the Church of Knowledge's rule.
"That's a choice all strong people make. Eagles don't mingle with sparrows," Gusain praised.
Lumian, still sketching, laughed.

"Now, you need to convince me that you have a promising future. I won't stand with losers."
"I've incited dozens of riots and haven't been caught by the Church of Knowledge. Isn't that reason enough?" Gusain sipped his Lanti Proof.
Lumian shook his head.
"In my hometown, there's a saying, 'One swallow doesn't make a summer.' It means that a single event can't predict a season. Making hasty judgments based on isolated incidents is unwise."
"What do you need to be convinced?" Gusain tilted his head.
Lumian chuckled in response.
"Pass my test."
Gusain paused for a moment, then laughed.
"Normally, wouldn't it be our organization testing new members to see if they're qualified. How did it become the other way around?"
"It depends on the new member's strength and importance, not past experiences," Lumian said, with an expression suggesting he didn't need them to stir up trouble-he could form his own team.
Gusain drank his Lanti Proof, then said, "What do you want us to do?"
Lumian remained silent until he finished his sketch, then pushed the paper toward Gusain.
"Find this person."
The drawing was of Albus Medici.
Although Lumian's drawing skills weren't high, his precise control as a Hunter, his deep memory of the subject, and mental reconstruction made Albus Medici's likeness vivid, capturing his aggressive, unpleasant aura.
"Him?" Gusain asked, confirming as he held the drawing.
Lumian nodded slightly.
"His real name is Albus Medici. I don't know if he's using an alias in Morora."
"Medici..." Gusain repeated the last name softly.
He folded the drawing, tucked it into his pocket, then picked up his drink.
"You can test us, but we need to test you too.
"You must prove your capabilities."
"Killing the original owner of this bar isn't enough?" Lumian smiled. "Or do you want to duel me?"
Gusain, maintaining his gentlemanly demeanor, shook his head.
"We acknowledge your strength. Now we need to test other aspects."
Lumian, holding his glass, turned to Gusain, waiting for him to elaborate.

Gusain glanced around, his eyes resting on the irresistibly charming Julie for a moment.
Lowering his voice, he said, "The Church of Knowledge's control over Morora relies on something in the underground mausoleum of the cemetery. Our ultimate goal is to break in and take control of it.
"It's very dangerous. We found a similar place to train our members. Your test is to enter that fog-covered underground area, overcome the challenges, and reach the marked location."
The goal is still 0-01? Lumian thought for a few seconds and said, "Alright, when do we start?"
"Tonight," Gussin finished his Lanti Proof, paid, and left the Carnivore bar.
Lumian glanced at Julie, noticing she was dealing with customers politely and reservedly, seemingly unaware of his conversation with Gusain.
Heh... Lumian smirked inwardly, set down his glass, and headed upstairs.
...
Trier, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai.
"Jenna should be back the day after tomorrow, right?" Franca murmured, standing by the living room window, a bit wistful and fearful.
Her face alternated between light and shadow against the deep night and streetlights, like an enchanting dream.
Suddenly, she saw Penitent Baynfel, dressed in black clerical robes and looking like a charred corpse, emerge from the void, holding a letter.
A letter? Who's writing to Lumian? Hmm, Baynfel's appearance here means messengers can't locate Morora, even those with special contracts... Franca accepted the letter with a polite smile.
"Thank you."
Baynfel nodded, turned, and vanished into the night outside the window. Franca sighed and mumbled, "l wanted to build a relationship and ask you to introduce me to a messenger..."
She raised her right hand, catching a mixed scent of powder, perfume, grass, flowers, and spices from the letter.
A letter from a woman? Franca, entrusted by Lumian, muttered as she opened the letter and read it.
"Not sure if I should call you Monsieur Louis Berry or Monsieur Lumian Lee.
"Through Rhea, I've delved into Matani's mysticism circle, learning much about the mysticism and realizing I'm not weak-just

inexperienced and unable to show it. For real.
"Of course, I've also realized the gap between us and how vast the world is beyond Matani.
"I'm willing to help your friend and hope you'll keep your promise.
"Amandina."

Chapter 806: Expressing Goodwill

Amandina? If it were anyone else, Franca might not have remembered, but she couldn't forget this participant of the Dream Festival, a girl who called the Underworld Daoist her teacher. Franca later summoned the Armored Shadow Chen Tu for more information, and she might even need Amandina's help.

With this in mind, Franca reached into her Traveler's Bag and counted her accumulated gold.

Including the final payment from a member of the Curly-Haired Baboon Research Society, she now had gold worth 82,000 verl d'or and nearly 20,000 verl d'or in cash. With a little exchange, it would be enough to meet the requirements of the Armored Shadow, Chen Tu, for a conversation.

Of course, Franca didn't plan to do this anytime soon.

First, Lumian was in Morora. Without using his special connection with the contract target, even knowing the Armored Shadow's name as Chen Tu, Franca wasn't sure she could summon the spirit from the original world. After all, that might not be its true name, and translating it into ancient Hermes or other mystical languages might correspond to different spirit world creatures.

Secondly, facing the Armored Shadow without a demigod present would likely be extremely dangerous.

Amandina's presence might partially substitute for a demigod, intimidating the Armored Shadow.

Should we wait for Lumian to return from Morora before summoning Chen Tu again? Franca felt a mix of excitement and apprehension, a state known as "near-home anxiety."

After a moment, she exhaled slowly, deciding to respond to Amandina on Lumian's behalf.

Hmm, Lumian promised to take Amandina to the area around the Samaritan Woman's Spring, giving her a chance to meet the Underworld Daoist outside of the Dream Festival.

This is beneficial for us, but it's too dangerous with my current strength.

Besides, I'm not sure if the power brought by The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings combined with the Tarot Club's Minor Arcana identity can penetrate the fog around the Samaritan Woman's Spring.

We should wait until Lumian is out of Morora. For now, I'll show Amandina some goodwill to lay the groundwork for future cooperation...

Hmm, I'll organize some important mysticism knowledge and give it to Amandina for free. Show some respect for the higher

authority, if not for me. If the Underworld Daoist sees how well I treat His disciple, maybe His attitude will change...
Also, I'll ask Amandina which path of the divine she wants to take besides the power of the boons and help her get the corresponding potion formulas and materials. This won't be free. Giving everything for free would make us look too humble and lead to disrespect. Too much kindness can turn into resentment...
Amandina should choose between the paths of Darkness, Death, and Warrior. The potion formulas and characteristics for the mid-to-low Sequences of the Warrior path are relatively easy to find. Maybe we can ask Madam Justice to get help from Mr. Star for the Darkness path. He seems to be a high-ranking member of the Evernight Goddess Church; last time, he wore red gloves...
Perfect timing, I was about to report the secrets of the Demoness Sect taught by the Demoness of Black and mention Amandina's situation to see what mysticism knowledge can be shared and what can't be leaked...
Having sorted her thoughts, Franca returned to her bedroom, sat at her desk, and began writing her report.
...
South Continent, Port Port Pylos of Matani, in a three-story white marble villa.
Having finally made up her mind and sent out that letter, Amandina grew more awake as the night went on, pacing back and forth in her soft, girlish bedroom, waiting for Lumian's reply.
The more she learned about mysticism and Beyonders, the more she realized the gap between herself and Lumian and how ignorant she had been.
Though she felt she could continue living as she had, maintaining the appearance of a normal high-society person with certain supernatural abilities, the events during the Dream Festival and the rumors she had heard from various mysticism circles made her feel a sense of crisis and urgency.
Living in the South Continent in an era of increasing disasters, her Sequence 7 Nightmare powers and current situation of facing everything alone made her truly afraid that one day her entire family would become sacrifices in a Rose School of Thought blood ritual or that the hidden problems of the Dream Festival would suddenly erupt and engulf her.
The more she knew, the more afraid she became.
Amandina felt she could never return to her previous state of ignorance and recklessness, and she had a strong desire for higher Sequences and more extraordinary power.
That would mean she could do more and see more.

Suddenly, she saw the same cool-looking charred messenger from before emerge from the void, handing her a small dressing mirror.
A mirror? *What does Lumian Lee mean by giving me a mirror?* Amandina accepted the mirror with curiosity and confusion, feeling it was quite ordinary.
She was about to ask the Penitent Baynfel when she noticed a dark, aqueous light spreading across the mirror's surface.
As the light flowed, the mirror gradually brightened, revealing a figure.
A mystic telegraph? And one where you can see and talk to the other person? How fascinating... Amandina didn't notice the messenger leaving, her attention entirely captivated by the mirror.
She soon realized that the figure in the mirror wasn't Lumian Lee but a stranger, a woman.
The woman had lake-colored eyes, both bright and deep, as if hiding countless words that made one want to explore them. Her nose was delicate and straight, her lips a tempting combination of red and tender white skin, and her eyebrows extended to her temples, with her flaxen hair tied into a ponytail, giving her an air of elegance.
So beautiful... Amandina stared blankly, instinctively admiring the woman in her mind.
She herself was a girl of outstanding appearance and had always been proud of it, but this time, she felt no sense of competition, entirely immersed in a beauty she had never seen before.
Her gaze naturally lowered, seeing the smooth, slender neck and the lace flowers around the shirt collar.
For some reason, Amandina felt an urge to see the entire body of the woman in the mirror, to see how beautiful she would look naked.
She felt this wasn't her own problem. Even Padre Cali who only liked men would surely have a similar urge!
Using a bit of Charm to enhance goodwill for easier communication, Franca also observed Amandina.
This girl had a waterfall of black hair and blue eyes, exuding a youthful energy of free self-expression.
All of Lumian's female acquaintances are quite beautiful... *Is this a Hunter's talent?* Franca smiled sweetly through the glass mirror.
"Lumian is busy right now and can't leave, so he asked me to communicate with you."
Amandina snapped out of her daze, shaking off the spell of the woman's beauty.
She looked at Franca in the mirror, curiosity and a desire to explore igniting within her.

"You're Lumian... Eh... Monsieur Lumian Lee's friend? The one who might need my help in the future?"
"Yes." Franca smiled and nodded.
Hmph, and you say you're not lovers. Such a beautiful woman makes even me, who likes men, want to sleep with her. How much more for a man who doesn't like men... Amandina felt she had seen through Lumian's lie.
She straightened her waterfall-like hair and asked brightly, "I'm willing to help you. Can you keep your promise?"
"That might have to wait until Lumian finishes his current tasks, and you're not strong enough yet," Franca said succinctly. "Do you want to advance through potions besides the power of boons? Which path do you want: Death, Darkness, or Warrior?"
Franca spoke quickly because the power of the Ice Amulet was limited in time.
After posing the question, she suddenly thought of something.
It is said that the Warrior path's potions has a significant height-enhancing effect, even turning the drinker into a giant at higher levels...
Hmm, turning such a pretty girl into a three or four-meter-tall giant beauty seems odd... Franca wasn't sure if she was worried or looking forward to it.
Amandina had discussed with Lumian which paths she could take and had thought seriously about it, so she quickly made her decision.
"Darkness."
As a girl who had always been good at understanding her parents' thoughts and was adored by her elders, Amandina felt that since the figure during the Dream Festival had only given her the power of Darkness and not the Death power given to Robert or the Warrior power given to some gravekeepers, it might mean that He wanted her to be pure and focus on the path of Darkness.
She also planned to go to the ancient tomb during the next Dream Festival to receive more gifts, naturally not wanting to disappoint that figure.
I still want to see what happens when the power of the Death or Warrior path is mixed with the Darkness boon... Franca said seriously, "I will inquire and gather the necessary things for you, but you need to pay for it or complete tasks I assign."
Amandina was no longer the naive girl she used to be and understood the value of potion formulas and Beyonder ingredients. She nodded.
"Okay."
Franca smiled in the mirror.

"Also, I appreciate you agreeing to help. No matter what Lumian promised you, I will provide you with some extra mysticism knowledge for free."
"Really?" Amandina was delighted.
This beautiful lady is truly generous!
And it's not a trap. The potion formulas and Beyonder ingredients come at a cost.
Franca didn't answer directly but smiled and said, "Remember, my name is Franca."
As she spoke, she raised her right hand and pushed a stack of stapled papers forward.
In Amandina's eyes, the stack grew larger, eventually penetrating the glass and falling into her hands, while Franca's image disappeared from the mirror.
Franca... Lumian Lee and she make a good match... Amandina imagined Lumian and Franca together, suddenly having some romantic thoughts.
She whispered to herself, That must be beautiful. I'd love to see it...
Suppressing the images in her mind, Amandina looked at the papers in her hand, glancing over a line of words: "Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence..."
Wh- Amandina was both bewildered and deeply impressed.
...
Morora, late night.
After the Carnivore bar closed, Lumian exited through the back door and saw Gusain wearing a top silk hat.
Gusain slowly smiled. "I'll take you to the place for your test now."

Chapter 807: Overlooked

Morora's night was devoid of streetlights, relying solely on the crimson moon high above to provide light, casting deep darkness and dense shadows everywhere.

Gusain, dressed like a gentleman, carried a lantern as he led Lumian to a neighborhood near the edge of the city.

The area had been completely abandoned due to a small volcano that had erupted, swallowing several houses and leaving a charred wasteland in its wake.

"The place you mentioned isn't at the base of the volcano, is it?" Lumian glanced around, adjusted his cuff, and smiled.

Gusain nodded slightly.

"Yes, the volcanic eruption affected the underground part of the cemetery, allowing its power to seep out. The lava receded quickly, leaving behind an empty void.

"If you can find the right path through the void filled with the fog of war and reach the designated spot, it will prove you have the qualifications to join us in penetrating the underground part of the cemetery."

Fog of war... Gusain had been using this term to describe the underground fog, which seemed to have leaked from the mausoleum containing 0-01, which represents the Red Priest... Lumian didn't conjure a bright white fireball for illumination. Instead, he followed Gusain, who carried the lantern, into a building on the edge of the volcanic area.

Inside the house, filled with solidified volcanic rock, they descended a precarious staircase into a partially collapsed basement.

The basement walls had a gaping crack leading to a void filled with dense fog.

"You need to reach this point near the cemetery's underground section and light the oil lamp between four stone statues. Remember, there are four statues facing each other in pairs." Gusain hung the lantern on a protruding stone brick in the wall crack and took out a simple map, pointing to the destination.

Lumian studied the map for a minute, then turned his gaze to the dense fog outside the crack. "What's special about this fog?"

Gusain pressed his top hat and smiled.

"It significantly reduces your visibility, affects your hearing and smell, suppresses your Astral Projection's interaction with the spirit world, and dulls your spiritual warning and intuition."

"And?" Lumian asked, seemingly relaxed.

Gusain thought for a few seconds.

"The fog of war envelops the corresponding spirit world area. Some Beyonders, even if they can enter the spirit world, can't locate themselves or escape the fog. If they try to teleport out, they might get lost somewhere in Morora and never return to reality."
Seeing means being able to teleport there? With my Hunter's vision, I can only see five or six meters... Lumian roughly understood the fog's effects and laughed.
"If I could create a hurricane, could I blow it away?"
"We've tried. You can, but once the wind stops, the fog comes back, and the dispersal is limited to reality, not affecting the part seeping into the spirit world," Gusain explained the previous experiment's results.
Lumian asked a few more details, then conjured a bright white flame to hover above his head.
He stepped forward, through the crack, and into the dense fog.
Unlike normal fog, this one felt like it had been scorched by fire. As Lumian inhaled, his airways stung with a fiery pain, and his mind filled with the smell of burning, blood, and rust.
The dense fog churned, and the ground trembled slightly.
Lumian saw tall figures emerging from the fog five or six meters away.
These figures were made of black iron, covered in dark red rust, like neglected metal puppets.
Some lacked arms, others had disjointed bodies, and some had gaping holes in their chests. They staggered towards Lumian, wielding giant swords that gleamed coldly.
Lumian chuckled. "Who dug you out of the trash heap? Recycling, huh?"
Before he finished speaking, he disappeared from his spot, reappearing behind one of the iron puppets.
His eyes turned iron-black, and his right fist ignited with bright white flames, crashing down on the puppet's waist.
Suddenly, a bright white flame spear shot from the crack in the wall, hurtling towards Lumian.
Lumian couldn't dodge or use Spirit World Traversal in time. He could only fall to the ground, following the momentum of his right punch.
At the same time, he prepared to swap places with his shadow.
Bang!
His flaming right fist struck the puppet's waist, creating a spiderweb of cracks.
Then, his fist brushed against the metal surface, pulling his body to the ground, narrowly avoiding the white flame spear, though a lock of his hair caught fire.

With a clatter, the white flame spear pierced the puppet and landed two meters away, revealing Gusain in his top hat.
The invigilator was the attacker!
The second most dangerous person in Morora!
Creak! Creak! The puppet took a step forward out of inertia, then collapsed into a heap of scrap metal.
Lumian, lying on the ground, didn't roll away. Since he hadn't gone far from the basement, he teleported to the crack covered in dense fog, moving as far as his vision allowed to escape the fog of war.
Once outside, he could either counterattack Gusain or find a chance to escape, both better options than fighting in a preset scenario.
Whenever possible, avoid fighting in someone else's setup!
As Lumian's figure appeared in the dense fog near the basement crack, he saw a bright white flaming metal spear rushing towards his heart as if waiting for him to come.
Besides Gusain, there was another ambusher!
Gusain's attack seemed to lure Lumian to teleport towards the exit, stepping into a trap!
At this moment, Lumian, in Morora, far from Franca and Jenna, couldn't use their Mirror Substitution. He could only swap places with his shadow in a flash of light.
Pfft!
The bright white flaming spear pierced Lumian's chest, setting him ablaze.
But Lumian's figure turned thin and black, dissolving like a shadow in the firelight.
The spear-wielding man stepped through the crack into the fog of war.
His hair was tinged with blood, his features aggressive, and he wore a black and red jacket. He was Albus Medici.
Albus Medici, whom Gusain was supposed to be looking for, was here!
Lumian's figure reappeared in another direction, but due to the fog of war, he was still within six meters of Albus, Gusain, and the remaining iron puppets.
He saw Gusain's forehead glow red, something about to emerge. Albus's hair was covered in red flames, lengthening as it spread.
"Traitor," Gusain whispered, sentencing him.
He then created several bright white fireballs, hurling them at Lumian to cover every corner.
He seemed unafraid of affecting himself or Albus, though they were only five or six meters apart, and the fireballs could flatten the Carnivore bar.

Hearing Gusain's words and seeing Albus's stance, Lumian understood why he was attacked: He had overlooked the Iron and Blood Cross Order!
This secret organization, primarily following the Hunter path, was also searching for 0-01. Over the years, someone had likely infiltrated Morora.
One of them was Gusain!
With the core members of the Iron and Blood Cross Order's strange connection to Fourth Epoch Trier, they could maintain some self-awareness in Morora. Using 0-01 to sense the approaching enforcement team made sense, fitting Gusain's behavior!
Now, it seemed Albus Medici was still cooperating with the lron and Blood Cross Order, using the secret organization. Lumian's attempt to use Gusain's power to find Albus had been turned into a trap.
Seeing the incoming bright white fireballs and Albus blocking the exit, Lumian didn't hesitate. His sleeve flashed, and he disappeared again.
This time, he left behind a makeup mirror.
The mirror fell through the dense fog, cracking as it hit the ground.
Rumble!
Gusain's fireballs exploded, only affecting a six-meter range, unable to disperse the dense fog of war, confined to a small area.
The mirror shattered into countless pieces, some turning to dust, others melting and reforming.
Albus, feeling the impact and heat, muttered in confusion, "Using the mirror world?"
Behind the dark void of the mirror, Lumian used the Mirror Cufflink again, quickly looking forward and finding the fog of war hadn't invaded the dark, web-like tunnels.
Indeed, in Morora, the mirror world is special... Lumian dared to trust Gusain and enter the fog of war for the test because he had the Mirror Cufflink.
Of course, with items like the Sword of Courage, he wasn't without fighting strength, but he didn't want to risk it in an enemy's prepared battlefield without knowing Albus's full capabilities.
Lumian chose a mirror mark in Morora and used Spirit World Traversal to leave.
As he vanished, the dark void behind the mirror silently collapsed with its shattering.
Lumian's destination was Julie's room mirror.
Upon arrival, he looked through the glass, finding Julie, the Demoness, nowhere to be seen, not even asleep in bed.

Lumian's lips curled into a smile.

Chapter 808: Return

Not far from the abandoned neighborhood, Albus Medici, who had parted ways with Gusain, walked along the shadows by the roadside toward the cemetery.

Suddenly, he stopped, as if sensing an undercurrent in the nearby darkness.

Albus chuckled, and a dense fog immediately surged out, covering his figure and half the street.

After several seconds, the fog gradually dispersed, but Albus was no longer there.

He had vanished.

From the shadow that had just been enveloped by the fog, Julie, with her hair tied up and wearing a slit dress, emerged, staring at the spot where Albus had stood for several seconds.

A golden ring with a blue gemstone adorned her left middle finger.

Julie looked away, her expression somewhat grim, and headed toward the few blocks where the exiles gathered.

Some time later, in the deep darkness of the night, the sharp, painful screams of a man echoed from a room.

...

Lumian returned to the full-length mirror in his room and stepped out, lying down on the bed.

After discovering that Julie had quietly left the Carnivore bar, he knew the Demoness had been secretly following him and Gusain.

This was one of his intended outcomes.

Otherwise, he wouldn't have discussed searching for Albus Medici and accepting the corresponding test with Gusain at the bar.

He had done it to ensure that Julie, temporarily acting as a bartender, would hear it!

Although he and Gusain had lowered their voices, the Demoness was close enough to catch the crucial information with her enhanced hearing.

Of course, Lumian hadn't initially considered Julie as a contingency plan because Gusain had witnessed the Demoness castrate Vijepan and had clearly noticed her beauty and charm when she became a bartender.

In such a situation, Gusain would likely guess Julie's identity as a Demoness and remain cautious, knowing she might have overheard their conversation.

Lumian's primary goal was to gauge the progress of the Demoness Sect regarding 0-01 based on Julie's reaction.

If the Demoness Sect, through the long-term investigation of Celeste and other Demonesses, had completed preparations and

was only waiting for the final opportunity to act, Julie would avoid creating extra trouble and patiently maintain the status quo. In that case, Lumian would have to closely monitor Julie and Celeste to prevent them from taking the lead.
If the Demoness Sect wasn't confident and still lacked information, Julie would likely use this opportunity to gather more intelligence from Gusain and the rebels connected to him, making her actions more comprehensive. Lumian wouldn't need to be as urgent and could allocate time and effort to other investigations.
In this regard, he had perfectly achieved his goal.
Now, Lumian was more curious about Julie's reaction after discovering Albus Medici while following him and Gusain. *What would she try to do?*
Will she attempt an assassination on the spot, wait patiently to challenge Albus alone after he and Gusain part ways, or go find Celeste to discuss it first? It's a pity I don't know where they'll encounter each other, so I can't observe the battle and see what cards they hold. If I'm lucky, I might even eliminate them both if they end up badly injured... Lumian sighed regretfully on the bed.
After a while, he sensed some movement from Julie's room.
The Demoness had returned.
Lumian sniffed the air and detected a faint smell of blood.
He chuckled inwardly and mocked, Albus, did you lose your prized possession? I wonder if you can regrow it as an Iron-blooded Knight...
There wasn't much commotion in Morora just now, not like there was a fierce battle... So, did Julie fail to locate Albus and vent her frustration on some random guy?
Lumian waited patiently, ensuring the City of Exiles, Morora, fell into a deep slumber, then transformed into a shadow creature and blended into the darkness of the room.
He moved swiftly, returning to the abandoned neighborhood with the volcano, and arrived at the crack in the basement, once again gazing into the void filled with dense fog.
He felt it was necessary to investigate this area thoroughly to better understand some details in the 0-01 sealing information and gain further insight into the underground mausoleum.
Neither Gusain nor Albus would expect him to return here, especially after the possibility of facing Julie's attack!
The fog isn't as dense as before. The visibility range is about thirteen or fourteen meters... Was it Albus and Gusain enhancing the fog of war with their abilities or items earlier? Lumian observed the fog for a few seconds, making a preliminary judgment.

He then conjured a bright white fireball for illumination and slowly walked into the fog of war.
The fog felt similar to before, with no other changes. Lumian dripped a few drops of perfume on the ground every so often to mark his path for the return journey.
He was heading to the area marked with statues on the map Gusain had shown.
In the dead silence, only the faint sound of footsteps echoed in the fog as Lumian discerned the terrain, passing several iron puppets hidden in the fog.
Finally, relying on his Hunter abilities and the memorized map, he reached his destination.
There, against the rock wall, stood four statues made of gray-white stone, each over two meters tall.
These statues faced each other in pairs, their faces blurred, dressed in peculiar clothing, with square scarves wrapped around their heads.
In the middle of the statues stood a half-height stone platform with an unlit oil lamp on it.
Who made these statues? They weren't originally here. According to the 0-01 sealing information, this place isn't part of the underground mausoleum, it's just normal underground... After the volcanic eruption, some of the mausoleum's power leaked out, and someone built these four statues and placed the oil lamp here. What's the purpose? Lumian mused silently, staring at the bright white fireball.
Judging by the style of the statues and the overall arrangement, he doubted the Church of Knowledge had set them up to reinforce the seal.
It was more likely the work of the Iron and Blood Cross Order, which explained Gusain's familiarity with the area.
Meanwhile, Lumian felt the call from underground growing stronger.
It seemed to be just behind the rock wall, waiting for him to approach.
Lumian took a deep breath, suppressing his inner urge.
He circled the statues and the oil lamp on the stone platform several times, finding nothing unusual.
Lumian pondered for a moment and had two ideas.
One was to light the oil lamp and see what happened; the other was to take this opportunity to destroy something and trigger a possible change.
Lighting the oil lamp is too risky. It's not necessary yet... Lumian decided on the second idea after some thought.

Destruction is always easier than construction!
And if something went wrong, leaving a mess behind would be more meaningful than keeping the place intact.
Lumian conjured a bright white fireball, placing it at the base of one of the statues, setting it to explode with a delay.
After setting up five time bombs, Lumian moved about ten meters away, hiding in the dense fog, and snapped his fingers.
Rumble!
The four statues and the stone platform simultaneously underwent a violent explosion, cracking from the base and collapsing into piles of rubble.
The explosion dissipated some of the dense fog, allowing Lumian to see the statues and the platform.
No anomalies or dangers appeared... Good. Now, let's see if Gusain or Albus notice the commotion and come to check it out. I'll be hiding here, ready to strike a fatal blow... Lumian grew more puzzled about the statues and the platform, planning to set a simple trap for Gusain that might be overlooked due to its subtlety.
If the statues and the platform were crucial, Gusain would rush to confirm the situation, instinctively thinking the destroyer had already escaped to avoid an ambush.
Just as Lumian was about to retreat further into the fog, he noticed the five piles of rubble starting to wriggle.
They collided and quickly reformed, rising back into their original statue and platform shapes.
Identical to before.
Wh- Lumian's eyes froze.
The stone statues and the platform can restore themselves?
No wonder the Iron and Blood Cross Order didn't station guards here...
They aren't afraid of these things being destroyed!
Lumian quickly recovered and tried a new approach.
This time, after blowing up the statues and the platform, he used his Traveler's Bag to collect some of the rubble, waiting a few meters away.
The stone statues and the platform restored themselves again, drawing materials from the earth, while the rubble in Lumian's pouch became ordinary stones.
Lumian temporarily gave up on destruction, emptied the pouch of rubble, and returned to the statues, picking up the oil lamp with the glass cover.
Inside the lamp was a semi-solid, semi-liquid yellowish grease, with a wick seemingly woven from black hair.
The more Lumian looked at it, the more familiar it seemed.

He began to recall the source of this familiarity.
After over ten seconds, he suddenly reached into his Traveler's Bag and took out an item.
It was a pale yellowish-red, semi-solid substance in a transparent glass bottle, with a thick black wick on top.
Corpse wax candle!
A candle made from the corpse oils of an Iron-blooded Knight and a Demoness of Despair mixed with other substances!
The oil lamp on the stone platform resembled it somewhat.
Lumian muttered to himself, Magician Magician said that Fourth Epoch Trier and a place in Bansy Harbor were the best scenes for the corpse wax candle...
What about the underground mausoleum in Morora, which is very similar to Fourth Epoch Trier?

Chapter 809: Additive

In the dense fog, Lumian stared at the oil lamp, feeling an urge to light it and see what would happen.

Eventually, he controlled himself and refrained from taking the risk.

With everything still in a state of chaos and uncertainty, Lumian believed that making any high-risk decisions would be unwise.

He also had no intention of taking the oil lamp to trade with Albus Medici for the head of the Abscessed Hand. Since the Iron and Blood Cross Order placed the oil lamp here without guarding it, they probably weren't worried about losing it or had many similar lamps.

Based on his observations, Lumian deduced that the pale yellow grease in the lamp likely didn't come from Iron-blooded Knights and Demonesses of Despair. It was different from corpse wax candles and seemed to be a mixture of mid-sequence Hunters and Demonesses.

Though it's less effective than a corpse wax candle, it should still work in the underground of Morora, which is similar to Fourth Epoch Trier...

Lumian reached into his Traveler's Bag.

Just because he couldn't light it or take it didn't mean he couldn't do anything.

He planned to add something extra to the oil lamp, ensuring the Iron and Blood Cross Order would face unforeseen complications during their rituals!

Lumian took out some old blood powder from the Demon Warlock, Ice Lemon Fish fillets, a Berserk Agent from the Nightstalkers, and another Bark Agent from the same source.

He placed them on the half-height stone platform, mixed a bit of each into a brown lump the size of a human finger joint.

What do you call this? A cocktail! Lumian chuckled, putting all the materials back into his Traveler's Bag. He then took out Mr. K's finger, sliced off some flesh, and wrapped it around the brown lump.

This was a precaution against the Iron and Blood Cross Order's inspection-Hunters from the Order would undoubtedly check the oil lamp for any issues before use, as it wasn't always under their strict watch.

In Morora, Lumian didn't worry that using Mr. K's finger this way would be detected.

Looking at the blood-stained lump, Lumian reluctantly scooped a bit of the semi-solid, yellowish-red substance from his corpse wax

candle and smeared it on the lump.
A double disguise, combined with a higher-Sequence, godhood-possessing item, should fool the Hunters' noses and eyes!
Once the lump was coated with the yellowish-red substance, Lumian examined the candle, reassuring himself, Just a Iittle bit, it shouldn't affect the number of uses...
After putting away the corpse wax candle, Lumian picked up the oil lamp, removed the wick made of woven black hair, and carefully submerged the yellowish-red lump into the semi-solid grease, ensuring it stayed in the desired position.
Seeing the lump's yellowish-red color blend with the surrounding grease, leaving only faint traces hidden inside, Lumian breathed in relief and slowly inserted the wick back into the semi-solid grease.
After several adjustments, the wick's position and condition finally met Lumian's requirements.
He could already imagine the scene:
The oil lamp would initially burn normally, with the corpse wax having perhaps a hint of godhood, enhancing the ritual's effect and immersing the Iron and Blood Cross Order members in the sensory experience.
This would last for twenty or thirty seconds, after which the corpse wax part would burn.
This would bring an intense pact-like experience, potentially fatal for some Order members with weaker wills.
Of course, this might also benefit some members, causing positive mutations, but the corpse wax portion was minimal, and the burn would soon reach the random materials wrapped in Mr. K's flesh.
Lumian wasn't sure what the impact would be, but he was confident it would worsen the situation.
Just suck on this one; it hits strong. Lumian recalled how South Continent people described East Balam cigarettes, smiling as he addressed the imaginary Order members.
Then, he cleaned up the traces on the oil lamp and tidied the scattered rubble.
Following the faint scent of various perfumes, Lumian found his way back to the basement crack through the dense fog, leaving the area slowly.
He transformed into a shadow creature, silently returned to the Carnivore bar, and pretended to sleep to avoid an ambush by Albus Medici, Gusain, and others.
At six in the morning, Lumian felt refreshed.
He rolled out of bed, stretched his neck, and laughed softly.
"Didn't come? Albus and the others didn't come, neither did Wanak. Do they think I have teleportation abilities, making it hard

to kill me outside a special battlefield or without special items?
"Heh heh, you're too hesitant, too cautious. Now I have shadows again, no longer afraid of sunlight, and can block another fatal attack..."
Lumian drew the curtains, gazing at the brightening dawn, his eyes falling on the books from the Church of Knowledge on his desk.
He instinctively felt a headache, frowning.
He resisted reading and learning, struggling with an indescribable inner turmoil.
If there were only a few books, Lumian would be highly motivated, reading diligently and focusing intently, but knowing there were three whole shelves of books and thousands of scrolls left him feeling defeated, unwilling to start.
After several seconds, Lumian rubbed his temples, sighed, and muttered to himself,
Well, since 0-01 was sealed by the Church of Knowledge, I should respect knowledge.
There's nothing else to do now, just waiting for Albus and Julie to take further action, hoping to seize an opportunity and direction...
Lumian sat down, leaning back in his chair, placing his feet on the edge of the desk, reading the books specified by Heraberg in a comfortable but precarious position.
He had read the first two or three chapters before and found nothing noteworthy, but this time he planned to study in depth.
As he read, Lumian's expression gradually changed.
He became engrossed in the reading, almost forgetting the time until Lez knocked on the door, telling him breakfast was ready.
"Okay." Lumian nodded, setting down the book without any visible changes and heading out of the room.
Almost at the door, he saw Lez turning towards the stairs and half-turned back, glancing at the books on the desk with a puzzled expression.
These books indeed contained important knowledge!
He was currently reading one thoroughly and had skimmed through the others, already finding similarities with the details in the 0-01 sealing information, along with more detailed explanations!
If I read through the three bookshelves and pass the exam, I might find a way to approach 0-01 through the overall sealing operation and use the sealing principles to protect myself when touching the artifact...
Knowledge is power, knowledge is wealth, knowledge holds all the answers... Lumian withdrew his gaze, his eyes flashing with

thoughts as he entered the hallway and turned towards the stairs.
The problem now was that this kind of knowledge brought noticeable corruption, just like the 0-01 sealing information. Lumian worried that the more he learned, the closer he got to 0-01, the more likely he would become its puppet.
Also, if I focus too much on reading these books, Albus, Julie, Gusain, and Wanak might get suspicious and also borrow a few books from the Church of Knowledge. Then I would lose my advantage... I need to wander aimlessly every day, set traps for them, outsmart them, and make it seem like I'm just reading out of boredom... Lumian's smile gradually widened.
He finished the flight of stairs and glanced at Julie sitting on a bar stool at the counter.
The Demoness wore a white shirt and black skirt, looking quite demure, but she swayed her waist gently, making the stool spin.
She glanced back at Lumian and continued talking to Lez, "I only think about finding what I lost from other men when I'm in a terrible mood. Normally, I just feel jealous and resentful, wondering why I lost it and they still have it?
"And you, your cooking has conquered me. I acknowledge your right to keep that thing, as long as you don't come to me when I'm in a bad mood, I won't do anything to you."
Is that why you Demonesses like turning lovers into Witches? Lumian sat beside Julie, smiling at Lez. "What are you guys talking about?"
Lez licked his lips and replied, "She asked if I was curious about the taste of Demoness meat and cut a small piece for me. Grilled, it was delicious, rich in fat and very chewy. Then we got to the topic we were discussing."
Lumian glanced at Julie and noticed the bandage marks on her left shoulder, with some bloodstains on her shirt.
She really cut it... One daring to cut and the other daring to cook, your mental states and inner worlds are beyond me... Lumian snorted and directly asked Julie, "What are you up to?"
Julie smiled, showing two shallow dimples.
"I want to learn cooking from Lez."
Her face was full of longing and expectation.
To cook for Celeste? You Demonesses... Lumian shook his head and focused on his breakfast.
...
Trier, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai.
Franca received a reply from Madam Judgment. The letter began:
"Mr. Star agrees to provide potion formulas and Beyonder

ingredients in stages for Amandina's matter, but he doesn't need money or resources. He only hopes you can help with some matters."
Me? What can I help Mr. Star with? Franca pondered deeply.

Chapter 810: Learning is my Hobby

Thinking that if it were truly dangerous and beyond her ability to help, Madam Judgment would surely protect her, Franca pulled out a sheet of pure white paper and began her reply: "Dear Madam Judgment, "If Mr. Star's requests are within reason, I have no problem with them."

After writing this, Franca read the rest of Madam Judgment's letter:

"The Demoness of Black's description and speculation about the Primordial Demoness are a common view within the Demoness Sect. However, if it were that simple, things wouldn't be this complicated.

"Many high-ranking witches believe the mirror world is vital for the Demoness pathway. This isn't entirely inaccurate, but as a collective concept of 'doors', the mirror world seems incapable of bearing such importance.

"These are things we need to understand further.

"Two of Cups, I know this may be harsh, but you still need to continue infiltrating the Demoness Sect for a while. You are currently our highest-ranked member within the sect.

"Due to the peculiarities of the Demoness pathway, we cannot actively cultivate male Assassins, and the existing Demoness Sect members are mentally twisted, longing to approach the Primordial One. We can only passively wait and find people like you who inadvertently enter the Assassin pathway..."

Suddenly feeling a heavy sense of responsibility... Franca muttered to herself, sighed, and continued writing her reply.

She wasn't too disappointed, still hoping to obtain the main ingredients for the Demoness of Despair within the sect, provided she found a way to bypass the cruel requirements of the advancement ritual.

After sending her reply, Franca leaned back in her chair, gazing idly out the window at the night sky.

Suddenly, the area in front of her grew extremely dark, and a silver skull emerged from the void, holding a letter in its mouth.

Another letter? What's going on? Franca took it, thanked the messenger, and watched it leave before opening the letter, inhaling its subtle, enduring fragrance:

"Dear Muggle,

"Do you remember the previous invitation?

"We're having an offline gathering in Trier this Saturday at 10 p.m. Are you still interested in attending? If so, please reply promptly, and I'll inform you of the location and participation details.

"Professor."
An offline meeting of the Academy team? Lumian's life is so eventful! I've barely been his proxy for a few days, and I'm already swamped with tasks, one after another... *Should he be called 007?* Even 007 needs sleep; he doesn't! Franca couldn't help but lampoon.
She had already noticed that wherever Lumian went, hidden catastrophes erupted one after another. But since she hadn't been directly involved in most of them, the impact hadn't been as apparent.
Now, as his liaison, she felt it keenly.
After a while, Franca sighed.
She'd have to use the Ice Amulet to contact Lumian again!
Since obtaining it from the Demoness of Black, she hadn't used it for investigating the Mirror People, spending it all on Lumian-related matters.
She needed to ask Lumian if he wanted to attend the offline gathering of the Academy team, which might include members of the Moses Ascetic Order. If he did, he'd need to designate a substitute and try to send out the Lie earrings.
Franca quickly wrote a letter regarding the matter, wrapping a copper coin, some wraith dust, and her rarely used Beatrice's Necklace in the paper.
She had noticed that after passing through the seal of Morora, Lumian's letters lost their physical form, leaving only pure information. So, she planned to experiment, seeing if ordinary items, highly spiritual items, and Beyonder items could all pass through the seal and in what state they would exist.
The experiment's results would determine if the Lie earrings could be sent out.
If it weren't for the fact that each mystical item was precious and useful, Franca would have included items containing Beyonder characteristics in this experiment.
After preparing the small package, Franca walked to the full-length mirror in the living room, putting on the Ice Amulet.
As it flashed with crystalline cold light, Franca pressed the package into the glass surface.
...
Late at night in Morora, on the second floor of the Carnivore bar.
Lumian sat under a glowing white fireball, focused on reading "Examples of Underground Mausoleum Construction."
Suddenly, he looked up, his eyes bloodshot, and glanced at the mirror in the room.
The mirror's surface had turned dark, with ripples moving within

it.
Lumian reluctantly set down his book, approached the mirror, and placed his right hand on it.
He saw Intisian words appearing on the mirror's surface, line after line, densely packed.
Professor's invitation... Academy team's offline gathering... experiment with transferring items...
Lumian's thoughts raced. Taking advantage of the Ice Amulet's active effect, he reached into the mirror and pulled out an item.
It was a diamond necklace.
Beatrice's Necklace!
The copper coin and wraith dust mentioned in Franca's letter were gone.
Lumian looked back at the mirror, seeing an image of the coin and wraith dust around the densely packed words, with a ghostly presence.
As the Ice Amulet's power waned, and the words faded, the items gradually disappeared.
Only pure information and items with Beyonder power can pass through that special mirror world, through the seal, and reach here? Hmm, items with godhood shouldn't work either, only something made within Morora... Lumian played with Beatrice's Necklace, using the Ice Amulet's remaining power to send Franca two words: "Necklace, okay."
The aqueous glow within the mirror quickly receded, and the dark glass returned to normal.
Soon, the mirror showed another anomaly.
This time, Franca sent the Ice Amulet through.
This helped Lumian conserve the use of the Mirror Cufflink-only two uses left.
Holding the icy talisman, Lumian began writing his reply.
He detailed the experiment results and his observations on the item transfer process, then instructed Franca to attend the Academy team's offline gathering in Trier as Muggle on his behalf.
After folding the letter and enclosing the Lie earrings and Ice Amulet, Lumian activated the latter, pressing the package into the glass mirror, sending it to Franca's apartment mirror.
Franca received the items, read Lumian's letter carefully, and murmured to herself, both expectant and anxious.
Do I really have to pretend to be Muggle?
Sigh, the Ice Amulet can only transmit information nine more times...
Meanwhile, Lumian returned to his desk and resumed reading "Examples of Underground Mausoleum Construction."

He was reluctant to rest; the more he read, the more compelling the books became.
Of course, Lumian knew this was a sign of slight corruption.
Just then, he heard a loud explosion.
It came from a few blocks away!
Explosion? Lumian used his Ascetic endurance to break free from the compulsion, extinguished the fireball, and moved to the window to observe outside.
The explosions continued, with brilliant flames illuminating the streets hundreds of meters away.
It was on the route from the Carnivore bar to the Church of Knowledge.
Lumian saw Julie jump out of her room, landing lightly like a feather, then blending into the shadows, disappearing.
Hunters causing explosions and fires? Lumian rubbed his temples, looking reluctant.
He grumbled to himself, I really don't want to get involved in your schemes and fights; I just want to study peacefully.
Since discovering the important knowledge in the books specified by Heraberg, he had become increasingly focused, spending all his time reading except when "acting" outside.
If not for the risk of exposing the books' importance, he would have used his special abilities to study all night.
The more seriously he studied, the less he wanted to do anything else, often relying on sheer willpower and even his Ascetic abilities to break free from that mental state.
After a moment, Lumian's expression calmed, and he muttered to himself, When I find the opportunity to eliminate you all, I can finally study in peace...
Suppressing his abnormal emotions, Lumian transformed into a shadow creature, slipping into the darkness between buildings and heading toward the explosion site.
Soon, he reached the destination and saw a half-collapsed building- Dades Agricultural Company.
Wanak's Dades Agricultural Company? Someone attacked Wanak?
Lumian snapped out of his study-induced haze, his mind suddenly alert.
He saw two giant figures emerge from the building.
They were three to four meters tall, with iron-like skin and blue paint depicting clothing, each holding a giant broadsword.
Iron soldiers? Giant iron soldiers? Lumian immediately recalled the iron soldiers he had seen deep in the Sauron family's Red Swan Castle crypt.
The next moment, one of the iron soldiers smashed through the

collapsed wall and fixed its cold gaze on the shadow Lumian was hiding in.
It charged at Lumian, raising its giant broadsword.

Chapter 811: Combination?

Discovered? *How did it find me?* I'm currently a real shadow creature...
Lumian wondered as he emerged from the shadows.
He instantly teleported to the side of the iron soldier.
The iron soldier ran past him, realizing too late that its target had moved.
It had to slow down forcefully, half-turning to sweep its giant sword.
Lumian, well-prepared, leaped high into the air. His fist, blazing with white-hot flames, struck the iron soldier's neck.
Clang!
The sound echoed like a church bell. The tall, heavy, and hard iron soldier was pushed back a step.
A fist-sized dent appeared on its metal-covered neck, surrounded by spiderweb-like cracks.
Lumian's strike was purely a Cull, without probing for weaknesses. He didn't need to.
Having thoroughly studied "Doll Crafting and Maintenance," he knew exactly where the weak points of such iron soldiers were!
Of course, he had also observed beforehand to confirm that this iron soldier was of the regular type and hadn't been modified.
The iron soldier, enraged by the Cull attack, swung its giant sword in a storm of slashes, cutting and chopping within a five to six meter radius.
Lumian teleported several meters away, watched the iron soldier, and raised his right palm, still with one hand in his pocket.
One after another, white-hot fireballs formed and flew towards the iron soldier.
The dark red glow in the iron soldier's eyes brightened as it locked onto Lumian and charged at him.
Rumble!
It cleaved through the fireballs in its path, enduring the rest as it advanced through the smoke and flames.
Almost simultaneously, Lumian vanished from its sight again.
Lumian reappeared on the soldier's shoulder, half-crouched, and delivered a powerful punch to the previous dent.
Whoosh! White-hot flames erupted from his fist.
Clang!
The sound was like a hammer striking a large bell.
Lumian's figure quickly faded, dodging the iron soldier's left hand as it released its giant sword to grab him.
A moment later, the dent in the iron soldier's neck shattered

completely.
The cracks spread rapidly to its head and body.
The iron soldier staggered forward, its metal fragments falling piece by piece, like an iron rain.
Lumian's figure swiftly outlined not far away. He scoffed and said, "Didn't you learn from the last time? Making the same mistake again. Oh, I forgot, you don't have a brain."
As Lumian finished speaking, the struggling iron soldier collapsed into a pile of metal debris.
Lumian then turned his attention to the other side of the Dades Agricultural Company.
The remaining iron soldier was silently burning with pitch-black flames, moving slower and accumulating more rust.
Clang! It fell to the ground, motionless, losing its oppressive aura.
Julie, wearing a cotton nightgown with a hint of spring, stood leisurely beside it. She watched as the iron soldier quickly shrank back to the size of a children's toy.
The metal fragments near Lumian were also shrinking, soon reduced to mere scraps.
Julie looked at him, smiling gracefully, "Boss, you're even more impressive than I imagined."
Compliment me all you want, but why stare at my crotch... Lumian scoffed, "You're not bad yourself."
Julie blinked and said, "But why don't you look at me when you speak?"
"Because you don't have anything down there," Lumian replied, ignoring Julie and heading towards the Dades Agricultural Company.
Julie's expression turned dark, her face flickering in the firelight.
After a few seconds, she muttered through gritted teeth, "Soon you won't have anything either."
By then, Lumian had reached the half-collapsed building and started inspecting the battle traces.
Explosions, high temperatures, fire, attacks directly hitting key structures... Definitely a battle between Hunters... Multiple injuries, more than one, but all blood traces burnt to scorches... Lumian quickly circled the explosion site, discovering several corpses.
Some were ordinary, like night shift employees caught in the blast, suffocated by smoke, burned by flames, or crushed by debris. Others were mangled, reduced to chunks of flesh, or dismembered as if violently torn apart.
Lumian noticed one corpse with a somewhat intact head, a faint red mark on its forehead, with something wriggling under the

skin, trying to emerge.
I've seen a similar mark on Gusian's forehead...
So, the Iron and Blood Cross Order is indeed trying to assassinate Wanak...
With Albus Medici joining them, they've grown bold enough to eliminate potential rivals and disruptors?
But it seems they failed... Wanak is formidable, facing an Iron and Blood Cross Order assault, possibly with Albus and Gusian present, yet still managing to counterattack and escape...
The Iron and Blood Cross Order is really cooperating with Albus Medici?
Do they truly believe this Medici descendant? Does Gusian not know what the Medici name represents?
Hmm, they know but intend to use Albus Medici, a collaboration full of mutual conspiracies?
As these thoughts raced through Lumian's mind, Julie approached and stopped beside him.
"Have you figured anything out?" Julie asked.
Lumian chuckled.
"Shouldn't I be asking you that? You Demonesses are good at divination, unlike me."
Julie's expression had returned to normal, her eyes bright as she said, "I tried, but got nothing. Some of them might be carrying items with high rank."
Before Lumian could respond, she glanced at her boss and said, "It seems that the Albus you're wary of has formed an alliance with Gusian's group."
Lumian nodded, then added, "They're probably trying to eliminate Wanak."
"Next, they'll try to eliminate me, you, and all the Hunters and Demonesses in Morora," Julie said with a slight smile. "Boss, I know you don't trust me, and I can't trust you either, unless all that's left is a shlong. But against the threat of Albus and Gusian, can we temporarily cooperate?"
You? A Demoness who doesn't like to study and only knows how to do twisted things, wanting to cooperate with me? I just want to study quietly and diligently... Lumian criticized, then chuckled and said, "Sure."
His goal was the information accumulated by the Demoness Sect and their preparations. "Cooperation" would make it easier to access them.
Julie was about to say more when she suddenly saw a group of black-robed enforcers running over from the direction of the Knowledge Cathedral.

Her eyes flickered, and she said to Lumian, "I have to leave now. Let's talk tomorrow morning."
Lumian glanced at the leading enforcer and noticed it wasn't Celeste.
He replied thoughtfully, "Alright."
Julie immediately stepped into the nearby shadows and vanished from his sight.
Lumian stared at the corpses in the ruins for a few seconds before turning and leaving Dades Agricultural Company, heading into the nearest alley.
In the darkness, he walked at a steady pace, pondering a troubling question: Aren't there too many Iron and Blood Cross Order members infiltrating Morora?
Just to deal with Wanak, four or five have already died!
It's not just about whether they could infiltrate so many members or if the Church of Knowledge is being too lenient, but no secret organization would want to suffer such heavy losses among its members.
Morora is the place where 0-01 is sealed. Every Beyonder sent here must be prepared for a high likelihood of sacrifice.
The Demoness Sect only sent one Sequence 5 Beyonder at a time.
Unless the previous Demoness lost contact and no longer responded, they wouldn't send another. Does the Iron and Blood Cross Order really not care about mid-to-low-level Beyonders, treating them as cannon fodder?
For a war, that's not too strange, but a sensible commander would only sacrifice soldiers at critical moments, not let them die on the way. Or has Gusian developed a large number of new Hunters in Morora... Lumian suddenly thought of Gusian, the bloody mark on that corpse's forehead, the stone statue, and the oil lamp in the depths of the underground fog.
Or are the true Iron and Blood Cross Order members only Gusian and a few others, while the rest are mass-produced through a special secret ritual?
As he pondered this, Lumian smiled.
If that's true, when Gusian and the others hold their next ritual to create soldiers, something very interesting might happen. The oil lamp I tampered with should bring about a different outcome...
I wonder what kind of soldiers will appear...
Lumian's pace quickened, and soon he returned to the Carnivore bar. He sat at his desk, forming a white-hot fireball to serve as a gas lamp.
He wanted to finish reading "Examples of Mausoleum Construction" so he could take the exam at the Knowledge

Cathedral tomorrow morning and borrow more books.
"Don't let anything interrupt my studying again..." Lumian muttered as he buried himself in his reading.
Amidst the occasional sound of flipping pages, he suddenly turned his head, his sharp gaze focusing on the mirror in the room.
The surface of the mirror rippled, revealing a figure with iron-black eyes, bright red hair, and a chiseled face.
Wanak? The same Wanak who was attacked earlier? Lumian narrowed his eyes slightly, waiting for the figure to speak.
The figure of Wanak swayed lightly, as if affected by water waves.
He asked in a deep voice, "Do you want to kill Gusian and Albus Medici?"

Chapter 812: Strange Test Script

Hearing Wanak's question, Lumian, who was already a bit irritated from having his study interrupted, laughed out loud. "Can you find them?"

"No," Wanak admitted frankly.

Unlike Lumian and Wanak, who had fixed residences, Gusian and Medici moved around in secrecy, making it hard to pinpoint their exact locations.

Wanak continued, "But I can use myself as bait to lure them out."

Lure them out? *What kind of Hunter path is this?* It sounds more like the path of a Fishing Master... Lumian mocked both Wanak and himself internally, gradually calming down.

He looked at the man with iron-black eyes, chiseled face, and suspected 0-01 corruption who had tried to kill him at their first meeting, and sneered.

"Bait? If you dare to wander the streets of Morora, Albus and Gusian would likely think it's a trap and not make a move.

"Of course, they might send someone to test if you're bluffing, but that won't help you ambush them."

Wanak's eyes remained sharp as he replied in a metallic tone, "I won't treat them as fools. I'll leave some traces, give them clues, let them find my hiding place on their own. They must act within these few days. They can't wait for me to recover, or it'll be a headache for them."

Lumian, using a Hunter's tone, laughed. "Confident, aren't you? Why not wait until you're fully healed to seek revenge one by one? Why take the risk now and set traps, even choosing to cooperate with me?"

"In five days, if they don't find me, those two rats will scurry back into the sewers and hide. I can kill any one of them, but finding them is still difficult," Wanak said, his tone full of murderous intent.

Lumian didn't ask more questions, pondering a few things.

This most dangerous figure in Morora, who seemed to have submitted to 0-01 and gained boons along with the corruption, has the power of a pseudo-demigod.

Does his current attitude imply 0-01 dislikes Red Angel Medici and the Iron and Blood Cross Order?

Or does 0-01 resist anyone trying to control it, as evidenced by Wanak's initial hostility towards me? But under current circumstances, he wants to target Albus and Gusian first and is willing to temporarily cooperate with the weaker side?

Wanak has pseudo-demigod strength and is in his home turf of

Morora, yet he was severely wounded by Albus, Gusian, and a few Iron and Blood Cross Order members, forcing him to flee...
Albus is indeed not simple, and Gusian must be formidable too. It was right not to go all out and ambush them earlier...
0-01 has some connection to that special mirror world, allowing Wanak to traverse through mirrors...
Lumian looked at Wanak, who was patiently waiting for his answer, and smiled. "Why me?"
Since arriving in Morora, he hadn't gone all out or used any powerful items.
"We're the same kind of people," Wanak said, his iron-black eyes cold.
"And I can clearly sense you're not simple."
Of course, I'm not simple, with so much corruption and so many things mixed together. Simple would be strange... Lumian raised his right hand, rubbing his chin, and asked, "Aren't you worried I'll take this chance to eliminate you, Albus, and Gusian together? You should always be wary of others."
"You don't have the capability," Wanak stated bluntly. "And in Morora, truly killing me isn't easy."
Lumian leaned back in his chair, half-closing his eyes. After a few seconds, he said, "Time and place."
"The timing is uncertain. It depends on Albus and Gusian's investigation progress. I'll inform you of the approximate time and location in advance," Wanak, his sharp, chiseled face showing a rare smile, said.
Lumian opened his eyes and sat up straight.
"With your strength, you were severely wounded by them. What special abilities did they show in battle?"
"Not severely wounded, just nearly," Wanak emphasized. "That Albus has special powers or items that can create war fog, a high-rank Hunter ability... Gusian, besides being a powerful Hunter, has some Demoness pathway abilities and can utilize the mirror world to some extent..."
Lumian listened intently, his smile gradually widening. "Pleasure working with you."
Wanak nodded slightly, his figure gradually fading in the rippling mirror.
Lumian sat quietly in his chair, muttering to himself, *Is this a trap?*
Wanak, Albus, and Gusian are using people as pawns in a drama to ambush me?
Or is Wanak using this chance to eliminate Albus, Gusian, and me together?

...
Lumian thought about many things, until his head hurt.
Forget it, I'll think about these conspiracies in a few days. Facing Hunters is troublesome. For now, focus on reading... Lumian turned his attention back to "Examples of Mausoleum Construction."
After another hour, he closed the book, satisfied.
After nearly a week of effort, he had finally finished the first batch of books specified by Heraberg, and could take the exam at the Knowledge Cathedral tomorrow!
Lumian lay back on his bed and fell asleep.
In a hazy state, he saw an army.
The soldiers were clad in iron-black armor, marching across a reddish plain, with something drifting in the distance.
Sensing Lumian's gaze, they turned their heads simultaneously, their eyes piercing.
Lumian saw their faces: Under the iron-black helmets, their skin was pale and shriveled, like all moisture and flesh had been drained, tightly clinging to their skulls. Dark red flames burned in their eye sockets.
Mummies...
An army of undead?
As this realization dawned on Lumian, immense fear surged from his heart, urging him to submit to some unknown entity.
He struggled against this feeling, finally waking up.
He opened his eyes to find it was just a dream. Outside, the sky was dim, with no sign of dawn.
Too much knowledge about 0-01 might be increasing the corruption? Lumian pondered for a few seconds, then forced himself to sleep a bit more until six in the morning.
Julie hadn't returned overnight. After breakfast, Lumian packed the books into his Traveler's Bag and headed straight to the Knowledge Cathedral.
Heraberg, in a white robe lined with brass, was explaining things to a group of new exiles. Lumian waited until the new exiles left the cathedral, then smiled and presented the books to Heraberg. "Your Grace, I've finished reading these books."
"Adding 'Your Grace' this time?" Heraberg teased with a smile, taking the books and pointing to the corresponding brass bookshelf. "Go there and pick a paper to do."
Prepared for this, Lumian walked to the bookshelf and randomly picked a paper.
As he searched for a table and chair, he glanced at the questions on the paper.

Suddenly, his gaze froze.
The first question was: "Have you had any nightmares recently?"
The second question was: "Please describe the content of the nightmare in detail."
Is this an exam on knowledge points? Doesn't seem like it... more like those psychological test questions Anthony brought back from the Psychiatrist Guild... Lumian thought, writing his answers on the brass bookshelf's protrusions.
He answered the entire paper truthfully.
"Done." Lumian felt like he was back in Cordu, reporting to his sister that he'd finished his test.
"Let me see." Heraberg extended his right hand.
After reviewing Lumian's answers from start to finish, he nodded slightly.
"You don't need to read all the books on these three shelves. Just this, this, and this..."
Heraberg pointed out eight books with a smile. "Finish these, and that'll be enough."
Huh? Don't need to read all three shelves? Just these eight books?
Lumian was momentarily puzzled, not understanding the basis for Heraberg's judgment.
Were the remaining books on those shelves suddenly unimportant?
Thinking about the test paper's content, Lumian had some guesses.
He thoughtfully responded to Heraberg, "Alright, Your Grace."
As he placed the books into the Traveler's Bag, Lumian roughly estimated the time needed.
If he focused without any interruptions, he could finish one book a day, but that would be suspicious.
About two weeks, maybe a bit more... But according to Heraberg, finishing these is enough, much better than my initial plan of taking six months to read all three shelves... Lumian quietly breathed a sigh of relief, feeling much better.
He mimicked his sister Aurora and Franca's occasional crazy talk, thinking with a smile.
Albus, Julie, Gusian, and Wanak, wait two weeks. Once I'm done studying, I'll kill you all!
Hmm, for now, I'll take advantage of Wanak's "invitation" to find clues from Albus about Hand Bro's head...
And gather intelligence on the Demoness as well...
...
Saturday night, Trier, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.
Franca looked at Jenna, who had naturally moved into the guest room after returning from Port LeSeur, and didn't ask why. Feeling

a bit upset, she said, "You don't seem very happy. Is Julien insisting on returning to Trier?"
"Yes, he's so stubborn." Jenna sighed deeply.
Actually, so are you, and your mother too... Franca muttered internally, saying, "Don't worry, there's still about a month to figure something out."
"Yeah." Jenna glanced at Franca, who had changed into a warlock's cloak. "Are you filling in for Lumian at that mysticism gathering?"
"Yes." Franca tossed the silver Lie earring into the air and caught it again.
Compared to her initial reluctance and anxiety, now she felt more anticipation.
It's quite exciting, isn't it?

Chapter 813: The Abnormality of Warlocks

Franca walked to the full-length mirror and put the silver Lie earring on her left ear.

Her skin immediately turned semi-transparent, and tiny meat tendrils seemed to grow beneath it.

These meat tendrils squirmed and shifted, gathering together again.

In just twenty to thirty seconds, Franca transformed into the appearance Lumian used to disguise as Aurore.

After adjusting herself a bit, she smoothed down her blonde hair and looked at her reflection, saying, "Aurore is really beautiful... Lie is amazing, it can do this much."

"You've never used Lie before?" Jenna, standing nearby, asked in confusion.

She remembered Franca using it more than once.

Franca chuckled and explained, "It's been a while. Just feeling nostalgic.

Plus, after becoming a Demoness of Pleasure and using Lie to tweak my appearance, I didn't dare do it again. Afraid I'd fall in love with myself and get lost in my own beauty.

"Now I've just made a slight adjustment to Aurore's face, and she looks so beautiful. A natural beauty like her taking the Demoness pathway, I can't imagine how stunning she'd become. Lie and the Demoness, they're a perfect match, but it's too easy to lose oneself, preferring to live in lies than face the truth."

Seeing Franca still able to joke around, Jenna quietly breathed a sigh of relief and nodded with a smile. "For us Demonesses, Lie is the most delicious poison."

Franca murmured in agreement and turned back to the full-length mirror to adjust her height.

Before leaving, she looked at Jenna and thoughtfully asked, "You need a few more good acts to fully digest your Witch potion, right?"

"Yes, if I rely on similar performances as before, it will take time and repetition," Jenna replied, knowing what Franca was about to say.

Just like she often did, Franca was about to impart some life, no, digestion experience.

With Aurore's enhanced beauty, Franca smiled.

"I think your acts have overlooked the black magic aspect of a Witch. Think about it, isn't black magic an essential part of many Witch legends? And many of those legends were likely left by real Witches.

"You could try finding a scoundrel, someone who deserves to be

hanged, collect their hair and flesh, and as a Witch, predict their doom. Use black magic to torment them daily until they die."
Jenna pondered for a moment. "I can give it a shot."
But... I do hope you becoming a Demoness of Pleasure would change things... Franca sighed inwardly but maintained her smile, pulled up her hood, walked out the door, and disappeared into the hallway shadows.
The scheduled offline gathering was at 6 Rue Belfort on Avenue du Boulevard, a four-story mansion with a garden, located in a luxurious area. Despite its opulence, it was always rented out for 15,000 verl d'or a year, having housed dukes, bankers, and diplomats.
Now, it had no long-term tenants and was temporarily rented for a week by the gathering's organizer, Professor.
Passing through the garden lit by gas lamps and circling a fountain with statues, Franca reached the mansion's entrance, where a table with a sign-in book was placed.
This was the simplest form of identity verification to prevent some odd Trieriens from wandering in.
Franca recalled Aurore's notes, mimicked the handwriting, and signed Muggle with a deliberate slant.
It felt like an unseen gaze lingered on the sign-in book for two seconds.
Silently, the mansion door opened, and Franca stepped inside.
She slowed her pace, seriously recalling the mannerisms of Muggle from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society gatherings.
Franca, highly professional in her role-playing, had previously used dream divination to retrieve those buried memories. Now, she quickly captured Aurore's walking style.
She shortened her steps and lightened her waist movements.
The mansion's living room was homely, with red and yellow decorations bringing an indescribable warmth.
Eight members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society were disguised as they had been in the Nation of the Evernight to indicate their identities. Some sat in the sofa area, drinking and chatting, while others played darts in a corner.
Professor, wearing a black butterfly mask, left the sofa with an orange cocktail in hand and approached Franca.
With a faint smile on her lips, she said, "Let's chat first, catch up on recent events, then we can drink, play board games, sing, and play cards. How does that sound?"
Great! If offline gatherings were just for trading items and exchanging mystical knowledge without any entertainment,

what's the point? One reason Franca was willing to attend was that it had been a while since she had fun with her "fellow countrymen"'-teaching Lumian and Jenna to fully understand certain things was too troublesome.
Franca gracefully pulled up a high stool and sat next to Professor, casting a glance at familiar faces like Periodic Table and Isotope, wondering if there were any hidden Moses Ascetic Order members.
"Muggle, are you settled in Trier?" The Academy team member with a periodic table painted on his face curiously asked Franca.
Franca restrained her overly active side, showing just a bit to match Muggle's usual behavior, smiling as she answered, "For now, yes. But considering Trier's situation, I don't plan to stay long. I might move in a while."
She subtly reminded her "countrymen" that Trier was dangerous, like living on an active volcano that could erupt anytime.
"Why do you say that?" Professor keenly asked the question Franca hoped for.
Franca curved her lips into a smile and pointed to the floor. "I encountered some things in Underground Trier that made me think great dangers are brewing below. They could erupt at any time."
"Like the Mirror People?" Professor asked thoughtfully.
Franca nodded gently. "Yes."
She didn't say much; it was confidential, and even if she did, others might not believe it without evidence.
Professor, Isotope, and others fell silent, pondering something. Associate Professor and others playing darts returned to the sofa area, steering the conversation elsewhere.
During the exchange, Franca was more active than Lumian had been, understanding many codes and familiar with many things, not afraid of making mistakes or missing memes.
Professor glanced at her, pleased. "It seems you've recovered from the April Fool's incident, back to your usual self, not as silent as before, mostly just observing."
Uh... Franca suddenly felt she might have messed up.
Not that her disguise as Muggle was bad, but rather too good.
If Lumian returned, the Academy members would surely wonder why she seemed post-traumatic again.
Can't just say she was hurt again, right?
Franca's mind raced, quickly finding a reason. "Actually, I haven't fully recovered. Some wounds might never heal. But chatting with everyone just now made me feel like I was back in the past."
Professor expressed her understanding. She was about to say more when her face, not covered by the black butterfly mask, suddenly

twisted in pain, her eyes bulging as if enduring great agony.
She bent over, clutching her head.
Franca paused, quickly scanning the others, noticing Associate Professor, Isotope, and Periodic Table with similar reactions. Only two non-Warlock members were unaffected.
Oh, I'm a Warlock now too... Franca mimicked their reactions, recalling the pain from her advancement ritual, displaying a headache-like state.
After two or three minutes, Professor straightened up, slowly exhaling.
The non-Warlock member code-named Griffin asked, "What happened to you all?"
Then, a realization struck Griffin. "The evil god Hidden Sage was injecting knowledge again?"
Associate Professor in the brown paper bag laughed bitterly. "Yes."
"In broadcast format? I thought it was one-on-one," Griffin marveled.
"Both happen." Periodic Table massaged her head, addressing Franca and the others, "Have you noticed the Hidden Sage has been injecting knowledge more frequently since that terrifying rainstorm?"
"Yes." Periodic Table nodded solemnly.
Seeing the Warlocks agree, Franca nodded too.
She pondered, *Could this anomaly be related to the Celestial Master?*
When Fourth Epoch Trier's seal was briefly opened, some powers leaked out, making the already insane Hidden Sage even crazier?
Franca knew the "terrifying rainstorm" referred to the time when the Hostel Project briefly opened the Fourth Epoch Trier's seal.

Chapter 814: Missing "Ten Pillars"

Franca couldn't talk about the Celestial Master at the moment, nor could she ask the Professors what knowledge the Hidden Sage had imparted.

She could only note this anomaly silently and planned to report it to Madam Judgment later, so the Major Arcana card holders could determine what was wrong.

After a moment of silence, Isotope spoke heavily, "Everyone here understands the pain of being force-fed knowledge by the Hidden Sage.

So far, we can barely endure it, but if the frequency increases, or the intensity goes up, it won't be long before our brains explode with knowledge, turning us into monsters."

Professor sighed slowly. "I agree. We must have a sense of crisis."

Periodic Table seemed a bit unstable. "I do feel a sense of crisis, but does it help? Can we unite and kill the Hidden Sage? I used to have such fantasies, but now... heh heh."

Franca could understand the last two sentences from Periodic Table. In the first two or three years after transmigrating into this world, as an atheist who had read many novels, she initially regarded the Seven Gods as more powerful Beyonders. She believed that as someone on the path of the divine, she might one day have a chance to slay deities and prove her way. But after witnessing more, gaining more knowledge in mysticism, she deeply understood the gap between Low- and Mid-Sequence Beyonders and demigods.

And that was just demigods, not true gods.

According to the Demoness of Black, true gods could modify and adjust the Sequence abilities within their pathways to some extent!

Meanwhile, Franca recalled the past and noticed that during their gatherings in the Nation of the Evernight, the Warlocks rarely expressed such intense negative emotions. Now, they were no longer hiding their pain and struggle, showing it very directly.

The Academy group has too many non-Warlock members, and those here today are a small circle who know each other well, so they can be more genuine? But I-no, Muggle-am not part of your circle. Are these intense emotions partly an act? What's the purpose? Franca didn't know if Lumian had infected her with paranoia or if her experiences with the Savoie Mob and the Demoness Sect had made her cautious.

"Yeah, what can we do..." she echoed Periodic Table's sentiment, seemingly touched.

Professor, steady as usual, said gently, "At least we can look for items or methods to reduce the negative effects of the Knowledge Pursuer.
Periodic Table was silent for a moment, then sighed deeply. "That's all we can do for now."
The Warlocks, along with Griffin and Eagle, discussed this issue, proposing various ideas and rejecting most, leaving a few for further verification.
Franca also used her imagination. Eventually, she said thoughtfully, "It's a pity we can't predict exactly when the Hidden Sage will go mad.
Otherwise, I know a place that might effectively reduce the impact."
"What place?" Associate Professor asked quickly.
Franca didn't intend to hide it. She felt that if Lumian were here, he would definitely reveal that location to the Professors.
Based on her understanding of Lumian: She had long noticed that Lumian was especially empathetic towards those with similar experiences and sufferings as his. Although he spoke harshly, he couldn't help but provide some assistance. Similarly, he also empathized with those who had similar experiences to Aurore, often putting himself in his sister's shoes.
Franca sighed slightly. "The small sacrificial square at the entrance of the third level of the catacombs. It seems to have remnants of the powers of the Eternal Blazing Sun and the God of Steam and Machinery, which can shield most of the external influences."
Professor's eyes brightened slightly under the butterfly mask. "I've been there, but I didn't know there were remnants of divine power."
She paused, adding, "This is actually very useful. When we are on the brink of breaking, I will take a box of white candles and enough food, stay at the sacrificial square until the accumulated effects dissipate and my body and soul recover, then come back up."
"Exactly!" Franca was happy for these Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society members.
Professor continued to say to Periodic Table and the others, "We can also seek help from Beyonders of the Apothecary pathway to produce medicine that quickly restores the body and soul."
"Temporary enhancement of brain capacity, learning ability, and soul strength would also work," Isotope and the others chimed in.
Their spirits finally lifted a bit.
After another half-hour of chatting, Professor and Associate Professor called a few people to fetch the board games from the

study, while Franca stood up and went to the small bar in the opposite living room to get a drink.
As she hesitated between fruit beer and soda, Periodic Table came to her side, looking over the drinks and lowering his voice, "Muggle, weren't you looking for members of the Moses Ascetic Order?"
Seeing Muggle with her hood pulled up turning to him, Periodic Table's chemical symbols on his face shifted as he smiled. "I am one."
So, finally, you're admitting? Franca wasn't surprised at all.
She even suspected all the Warlocks in this small circle were members, and Griffin and Eagle, who were not Warlocks, might be as well.
"You guessed it a long time ago?" Periodic Table noticed Muggle had no emotional fluctuation.
Franca chuckled softly. "It's not strange. I'm also a member of another secret organization. Many in the Research Society should have backgrounds in secret organizations or orthodox churches. It's not a problem as long as it doesn't violate our contract."
Periodic Table smiled. "That's true. You mentioned a Mirror Person named Griffith secretly replacing one of our members? I have a suspect now."
Franca had been tracking the whereabouts of the ore scholar, Jasmine- suspected to be Mirror People Palia-but had no leads. She didn't expect a clue about the more important Mirror Person, Griffith.
"Who is it?" she asked directly.
Period Table organized his thoughts. "Normally, I should report this to the higher-ups of the Ascetic Order for confirmation and handling, but I can't contact my direct Pillar lately."
"Pillar?" Franca asked, puzzled.
"The brass of our Moses Ascetic Order consists of the Ten Pillars, ten powerful demigods, maybe more. The one responsible for the Trier greater region and my direct superior is Kmerolo. After the terrifying rainstorm, his orders have lessened, and recently, we've had no response from our attempts to contact him," Periodic Table explained heavily.
After the Hostel Project, the brass of the Moses Ascetic Order in Trier had anomalies and then disappeared? This information is crucial and must be reported quickly... Franca looked at Periodic Table and asked, "No emergency contact with other Pillars?"
Period Table sighed. "No. Normally, we should pray to the Hidden Sage, report the anomaly, and He would give a revelation. But we tried, and there was no revelation, nor did any other Pillar contact

us."
Because the Hidden Sage has gone crazier? Franca nodded. "Go on."
Periodic Table laughed bitterly. "This situation isn't bad. Though lacking high-level guidance and resources, we also don't have dangerous tasks -unless Nikila is the Mirror Person Griffith."
"Nikila?" Franca pressed.
Periodic Table tersely acknowledged. "He's Kmerolo's deputy. Recently, his behavior makes me suspect he might be a Mirror Person."
"What behavior?" Franca asked in confirmation.
Periodic Table thought and said, "He gets angry more easily, has more negative emotions, and I noticed he seems awkward using his right hand, though he's right-handed."
"What's his real identity?" Franca's eyes lit up.
Periodic Table hesitated. "I can't be sure he's a Mirror Person. It's normal to have uncontrolled negative emotions after prolonged knowledge infusion. Before telling you his identity and possible residence, I hope to sign a notarized document with you, ensuring if he's not the Mirror Person, you won't kill him and must let him go."
As he spoke, he took out an expensive notarized document from a hidden pocket.
Seeing Muggle's slightly surprised look, Periodic Table laughed self-deprecatingly.
"Blame it on us following the maxim, 'do as you wish, but do no harm."
"Sure, no problem," Franca agreed readily.
She wasn't one to kill innocents.
...
Late at night in Morora.
Lumian put down his book, rubbed his aching head, and decided to rest by thinking of something else.
As he considered if he had missed any enemies or competitors, the mirror in the room glowed with water.
Wanak, with iron-black eyes and blood-red hair, appeared again, saying in a deep voice, "Gusain and Albus are about to step into the trap. I'll tell you my 'hiding place' now."
Is it starting? Lumian's mind immediately focused.

Chapter 815: Super Augmentation

As Wanak's figure faded from the mirror's surface, Lumian reluctantly stowed the books on his desk into his Traveler's Bag.

He stood up, left the room, and walked to Julie's door, knocking lightly twice.

Julie quickly opened the door, hugging a blanket to her chest, her bare shoulders glowing like twin mounds of snow under the moonlight.

"I wasn't trying to harass you!" she said with a hint of anticipation.

Lumian spoke as if to himself, "Wanak has invited me to deal with Gusain and Albus together, right in the ruins of Dades Agricultural Company."

Without waiting for Julie's response, Lumian turned and walked down the stairs, merging into the darkness that enveloped the night.

...

Inside a fog-filled hollow, in front of four statues facing each other, Gusain, wearing a silk top hat, said to Albus, who was clad in a black jacket with red stripes, "We can't be sure if the clues about Wanak are bait. We might step into a trap later."

Albus, hands in his pockets, chuckled. "That's why we're here. Whether there's a trap or not, as long as we're strong enough, we can invalidate their schemes and make them swallow the bitter fruit of their failure."

Gusain nodded lightly. "Yes, I've heard a saying: no matter how many eggs band together, they can't break a stone. What we need to do now is become that stone. Last time, we weren't sure if we could pinpoint Wanak, so we didn't risk activating the altar's full power to avoid wasting it. Now, we can give Wanak a 'surprise'."

Albus chuckled. "Not using it last time was good. The illusion might have made Wanak gather all our targets together, allowing us to deal with them all at once."

Looking around, Albus sneered. "I thought Lumian would return here these days, so I had you leave the Lamp of Calamity on the altar to lure him into using it. I didn't expect him to be such a coward."

"He should have been here," Gusain said, showing detailed knowledge of the altar's surroundings. "He tried multiple times to destroy the statues but failed. This led the altar to draw some power from the earth to repair itself, causing slight changes in the details. I didn't expect him to resist the urge and call of the Lamp of Calamity and not light it on the spot. For the Hunter pathway, such self-control is rare."

Albus lifted his chin. "You'd better perform the ritual now. Heh heh, and check the Lamp of Calamity to see if it's been tampered with or has had something added to it. A Hunter not causing some damage would be unworthy of the pathway's name."
"Are you underestimating my caution?" Gusain laughed, approaching the pedestal and picking up the lamp containing a semi-solid, semi-liquid pale yellow grease.
He carefully inspected it, sniffed its scent, and finally dipped his fingers into the lamp, touching the wick twice.
Gusain immediately withdrew his fingers, letting the white-hot flame ignite the pale yellow grease on them.
The scent of warmth, allure, dark fragrance, and rust quickly filled his nostrils. He half-closed his eyes, nodding slightly. "No problem."
Albus laughed. "Where did you learn the method to create the Lamp of Calamity and the corresponding secret ritual? It's quite fascinating."
"You'll find out later. Once we finish this, we'll be true companions," Gusain replied with a smile.
He turned, facing the four statues and the Lamp of Calamity, and took a small blue iron soldier from a hidden pocket, placing it on the pedestal.
Isn't it just the Fourth Epoch Trier? What's so hard to guess? Still keeping secrets... Companions, heh heh... Albus began to back away from Gusain, instinctively keeping a distance out of caution.
Finally, Albus stopped about fifteen meters away, watching through the thick fog as Gusain lit the lamp, sat cross-legged on the ground, and entered Cogitation to complete the secret ritual.
In just over ten seconds, Gusain, surrounded by a seductive dark fragrance, "saw" a dense fog.
Unlike the war fog in the hollow, this fog was tinged with a ghostly black hue, covering a city with no visible boundaries, only faint outlines.
Half-dazed, half-awake, Gusain floated to a familiar place.
After some time, he reached a tall shadow-like tower and descended rapidly, entering its eerie, sinister base.
Here, it seemed there was a well, blending into the darkness.
Gusain repeated the purpose of the ritual to fight off the increasing drowsiness.
He neared the well, gazing into it.
He then "saw" moss-covered stones and iron-black chains attached to the well's walls. The engravings on the chains were blurred, hard to discern.
I can now see the inside of the well's walls?

Never could before...
The ritual's effectiveness is due to my proximity to the great existence?
Gusain felt a surge of joy.
He excitedly looked at the dark water in the well.
The water rippled lightly, gradually forming a figure.
Gusain strained to see, suddenly spotting patches of brown bark.
The bark was embedded in a face, bringing an indescribable horror.
Bark... Gusain was simultaneously frightened and puzzled.
Why would bark appear here?
Shouldn't it be steel and blood?
Instinctively, Gusain looked at his hands, finding patches of brown bark rising on his skin.
Wh- Gusain's pupils dilated as he looked back at the well's dark water surface.
He saw the reflected figure clearly.
It was himself!
His face was covered with mottled bark!
The next moment, the bark squirmed, sinking inward and turning flesh-colored.
They became wet spores embedded in flesh, blooming to release countless tiny naked figures.
Gusain's terror broke its limits. He abruptly opened his eyes, breaking free from the ritual experience.
Huff... Panting heavily, he saw the iron soldier on the pedestal rapidly expanding to three or four meters tall, its eyes iron-black instead of the burning dark-red.
The iron soldier's spear was quickly covered in white-blue flames.
"Success..." Gusain steadied himself, no longer tense.
He thought the anomaly was due to his proximity to the great existence, deepening the ritual experience, thus showing more details.
"I'm stronger now..." Gusain stood up, extinguishing the Lamp of Calamity.
"This is a soldier puppet with some of the Iron-blooded Knight's power and status?" Albus walked back from a distance.
"Yes, treat it as a weakened Iron-blooded Knight. It's not something Wanak can compare to," Gusain answered confidently.
He hadn't yet examined the benefits and knowledge gained from the ritual.
Albus took a few steps and then stopped, looking at Gusain with a playful smile. "Your hair has grown."
My hair has grown? Gusain turned his head, seeing his brown hair

had grown to his cheeks from above his ears.
He suddenly had a guess:
Did this ritual bring me closer to the Demoness pathway?
With this suspicion, he lowered his head.
Sure enough, his chest was slowly bulging, stretching his shirt, sweater, and coat.
At the same time, Gusain smelled a faint milky scent.
Milky scent... Gusain was stunned.
Does the Demoness mutation cause this?
He was about to ask Albus about his changes when he saw his collaborator backing away.
Immediately, Gusain felt the iron soldier behind him bending over, its head lowering to his ear with the sound of metal clashing and rubbing.
The iron soldier spoke with a metallic voice, softly calling, "Mother."
"Mother... Me?" Gusain, confused, looked down to see his abdomen swelling visibly.
Seeing this, his mind buzzed, feeling as if he was reborn.
Albus, retreating slowly to avoid triggering anomalies, saw Gusain looking at him, smiling with maternal radiance, his blue eyes icy and sinister.
...
Rumble!
A massive explosion occurred in a district with a volcanic crater, sending a white fireball rolling into the sky, turning red, creating thick smoke.
In the ruins of Dades Agricultural Company, hidden in the underground chamber, Lumian and Wanak felt the near-earthquake-like disturbance.
From the direction of the tremor, Lumian quickly guessed:
The hollow filled with war fog?
A fierce explosion happened there?
Did Albus and Gusain make some preparations before dealing with Wanak, lighting the lamp I tampered with, causing an accident?
Lumian immediately shouted to Wanak, "The situation has changed!"
Then, he left the shadow state, teleporting to the corresponding district.
He didn't choose the hollow entrance with war fog as his destination, fearing the explosion was a bait by Albus and Gusain!
Only a Hunter knew how treacherous a Hunter could be!

Chapter 816: Dark Forest

On the edge of the district destroyed by the volcanic eruption, Lumian's figure swiftly emerged, his gaze fixed on the site of the violent explosion.

The ground had collapsed into a massive crater, thin wisps of fog rising from it, though not yet dense.

Albus Medici leaped out of the crater, followed closely by a three-to-four-meter-tall iron soldier wielding a white-blue flaming spear.

Lumian transformed into a shadowy creature again, blending into the darkness untouched by the firelight.

He decided to observe the scene before taking action.

Almost simultaneously, he saw a figure emerge from the crater, half blending into the night, half illuminated by the firelight: long hair draping over shoulders, a chest protruding prominently, and a stomach appearing swollen as if from excessive beer.

At a glance, Lumian recognized the figure from its now feminine, motherly face-Gusain.

Gusain turned into a woman? And is pregnant? Lumian was initially stunned, then quickly pieced together what had likely happened.

He remembered adding a bit of Berserk Agent and Bark Agent to the altar's oil lamp, both sourced from the Nightstalkers which were imbued with the power of the Great Mother.

So Gusain was the one who performed the ritual using the lamp? He already had some abilities linked to the mirror world, indicating his previous ritual knowledge and power were partly from the Demoness pathway. The Demoness pathway is closely tied to femininity in mysticism. So, with the divine effects of the corpse wax candle amplifying the Demoness experience, the Berserk Agent and Bark Agent linked his ritual to the Great Mother, resulting in this mutation?

Fascinating...

Lumian watched Albus Medici battle the motherly version of Gusain and the iron soldier, which was much stronger than previous soldier puppets.

He had no intention of helping either side at the moment.

A Hunter only struck at the most critical moment!

Frankly, if Albus Medici hadn't taken the head of the Abscessed Hand, Lumian wouldn't want to eliminate him right now. Even if Wanak's bait plan was a great success, trapping Albus and Gusain, he might still find an opportunity to let Albus escape.

This was to maintain a balance.

Until he finished his studies, Lumian didn't want any one competitor to dominate completely.
That would likely cause a sudden change in circumstances, forcing him to prematurely enter the underground mausoleum before finishing the books Archbishop Heraberg provided.
So, Lumian observed the fight, patiently waiting for an opportunity to get clues about the Abscessed Hand's head from Albus Medici, while casually admiring Gusain's transformation and the terrifying iron soldier.
Rumble! Rumble! Rumble!
Hunter battles were always marked by violent explosions. Buildings, their foundations already hollowed out and walls damaged by the volcanic eruption, collapsed one after another, raising thick dust clouds.
Seizing an opportunity, Albus Medici leaped into the air, forming a white-blue flaming longsword and slashing it at the iron soldier's head.
Boom!
The sword exploded, splitting the iron soldier's head open.
But the iron soldier didn't collapse. Instead, Gusain's right cheek instantly dented and deformed grotesquely.
In the next moment, Gusain's skull and muscles quickly writhed and expanded, restoring themselves.
With this change, the iron soldier's head also rapidly healed.
Wh- self-healing power from the Great Mother pathway, combined with the Sword of Courage's trait of sharing damage? Not only can they endure damage but they can also share abilities? Lumian felt a chill down his spine.
What kind of monster did my additives create?
Seeing this, Albus turned into a white flaming spear, shooting past the collapsing buildings to distance himself from the iron soldier and Gusain.
Thick fog enveloped the area around him, covering the streets for dozens of meters.
Seeing this, Lumian's eyelid twitched slightly.
He sensed that Albus Medici intended to flee.
He would too!
Facing the mutated Gusain and a near-demigod iron soldier, a slight misstep could result in severe injuries or death on the spot. Even if he fought hard and won, he wouldn't emerge unscathed and would likely have to face villains attracted by the commotion. It was better to leave the two monsters for the enforcers or the Church of Knowledge to handle.
An enemy's death was a good outcome, no matter who killed

them.
As the war fog formed, Lumian saw a figure appear atop the nearby ruins.
It was Wanak, with iron-black eyes and blood-red hair.
He took a step forward, raised his hands, and lifted his head as if praying to a deity.
Ooo! Morora's already volatile weather suddenly whipped into a hurricane, uprooting trees and forming a vortex connecting the sky nearby.
Whoosh! The hurricane blew away the war fog, revealing Albus Medici's position to Lumian and the others.
A citywide hurricane? Only a demigod could manage that, and not even all demigods... Right, given Morora's extreme weather, and considering Wanak's connection to 0-01, it's not as terrifying as I thought... Lumian's gaze sharpened as he noticed Julie, clad in a cotton nightgown, appearing in the shadows about ten meters from Albus.
The Demoness held a mirror, reflecting part of Albus's image.
Julie's acting now, perfectly coordinating with Wanak? Lumian was initially surprised, then understood why.
Everyone present sensed Albus was in trouble. Without prior agreement, they all made the same choice:
To ambush Albus-to nail his coffin shut!
This is the game's rule, the rule of Hunter and Demoness conflicts: without powerful constraints like notarized documents, alliances are fluid, constantly shifting. But if someone shows weakness, everyone else will target them, giving no chance for recovery...
Enlightened, Lumian saw Julie raise her right hand covered in demoness black flames, wiping it across the mirror reflecting Albus.
Almost simultaneously, Albus burst into flames, turning into crimson fire that shot out in all directions.
Some of the flames turned black, becoming calm from blazing, ultimately falling into the underground hollow still emitting war fog.
The remaining crimson flames regrouped about ten meters away, reforming Albus's body.
His aura weakened significantly.
In his eyes appeared a blazing white flame.
A white flaming spear shot from the shadows.
Lumian had joined in, attacking the downed dog.
Seeing this, Albus's short red hair instantly ignited, extending downward, as if turning into shoulder-length hair.
His face took on a faint iron-black hue.

Boom!
The white flaming spear exploded before hitting him, like a bursting firework.
Lumian's figure appeared behind Albus, his eyes shining silver-black.
He swung a fist at Albus.
The fist slowed, as if bearing a heavy fate.
Lumian was attempting to exchange Albus's fate.
Of course, he didn't expect success. He aimed to quickly browse Albus's fate, finding fragments related to the Abscessed Hand's head to locate it.
This was the most crucial task for him.
The silver illusory river of complex symbols quickly filled Lumian's vision, materializing countless fate fragments flowing forward.
Ignoring the rest, Lumian searched swiftly for his target by the approximate timeline.
In a blink, a fate fragment enlarged before him: Albus holding the rotten blue-black Abscessed Hand's head, walking to the underground mausoleum entrance, tossing it in from a distance, hearing it bounce around inside like a ball...
In the underground mausoleum? No wonder I couldn't sense it... Quite the hiding spot... Quite the provocation... At that moment, Lumian felt it wasn't a bad idea to kill Albus here.
This guy really knows how to annoy people!
The next second, before the fate exchange, he lost sight of Albus's silver river of fate.
The Medici descendant, realizing Lumian was behind him, turned into a blazing white flaming spear, shooting out of the ruins.
The iron soldier created white-blue Fire Ravens, chasing the spear like living creatures. Gusain raised his head, preparing to emit a shrill screech, friend and foe alike be damned.
Julie disappeared into the shadows again, but gray-white threads of spider silk appeared before and beside Albus's flaming spear, forming a resilient web waiting for him.
The hurricane hadn't stopped. Wanak leaped into the air, forming a massive white-blue flaming broadsword, ready to slash at Albus.

Chapter 817: Lightning Strikes

Albus's blazing-white flaming spear was about to crash into the layered gray-white web but suddenly disintegrated in mid-air.

Within the raindrop-like flaming fragments, Albus's figure emerged, rapidly falling to the ground to avoid the Demoness's web.

The white-blue Fire Ravens created by the iron soldier curved in the air, corrected their flight paths, and locked onto Albus again.

Wanak, who had leaped up using the hurricane, descended, raising his flaming broadsword to strike heavily at his target.

The explosions and the sound of metal clashing erupted simultaneously.

The swarm of Fire Ravens surrounded Albus before he could touch the ground, attacking him relentlessly, individually and in groups.

The blast wave and spreading white-blue flames threw Albus upward, right into Wanak's descending broadsword.

Clang!

The broadsword struck as if hitting metal, producing a cracking sound.

The resulting force slammed Albus to the ground from a height of two or three meters.

Boom!

The impact caused the ground to cave in, revealing the underground hollow filled with thick fog.

Albus fell in.

As soon as Wanak landed, he prepared to jump into the hollow to prevent Albus from escaping or recovering.

Suddenly, he hesitated and didn't make the jump.

He could only create hurricanes in Morora's unique environment and let them wreak havoc in the City of Exiles, unable to direct them precisely underground.

Fighting another special Hunter in the fog-filled, low-visibility hollow wasn't wise; it would put him in danger.

By this time, Lumian had finished attempting the Fate Exchange and withdrew his fist.

He deeply suspected that Albus's intended escape destination was either outside the ruins or the underground hollow covered in war fog.

The Medici descendant had never planned to easily break through the obstacles set by the Hunters, Demoness, and monster. Instead, he deliberately showed this tendency, using their obstruction to forcefully break through the already unstable ground during the previous battle and fall into his real destination.

That way, he could rely on the environment to escape the encirclement, try to hide, and find other possible exits.
Disguising his true intentions to confuse his enemies? No wonder he's a Medici... Lumian nodded thoughtfully.
Meanwhile, he also noticed Albus's astounding defense.
Not only had he withstood the Fire Ravens' bombardment, but he had also blocked Wanak's Cull strike, emerging with only minor injuries.
Simply metallizing his body to some extent couldn't achieve this. Lumian suspected Albus had an item or companion similar to the Sword of Courage that shared at least half the damage.
Considering Albus's abilities surpassing Sequence 5 and some beyond Sequence 5's capabilities, Lumian reasonably deduced a special connection with the Red Angel, allowing him to share some of the latter's power and endure some of the damage-an ability Hunters gained and deepened starting at the demigod level.
If not for being in Morora, the land sealing 0-01, Lumian believed Albus could have borrowed true demigod power, not facing so many limitations.
As the iron soldier prepared to jump into the fog-filled hollow to chase Albus, the motherly Gusain raised his head and let out a sharp, piercing howl.
Lumian and Wanak's minds buzzed simultaneously, their thoughts shattered, life force rapidly draining, causing weakness in the very depths of their souls.
Crack!
In the darkness at the edge of the district, a mirror shattered on the ground, revealing Julie's figure.
In the next second, Gusain fixed his gaze on Lumian, completely ignoring Wanak and Julie.
He caressed his increasingly swollen belly, his blue eyes turning vicious.
Under his will, the near Sequence 4 iron soldier abandoned the pursuit of Albus, turning to target Lumian.
Seeing this, Lumian, enduring the throbbing headache and buzzing in his ears, smiled and waved at Gusain and the iron soldier.
His figure then disappeared, leaving Gusain and the iron soldier to Wanak and Julie.
Bye-bye!
Lumian teleported to the entrance of the Church of Knowledge, just as two teams of black-robed enforcers rushed out.
He walked into the cathedral, found a corner, and sat on the floor, pulling out a borrowed book from the Traveler's Bag, leaning

against the brass bookshelf, and began studying.
He was concerned that the child Gusain carried might pose a significant threat and target him, so he sought the Knowledge Cathedral's protection.
I'm studying so diligently, shouldn't you show some appreciation, Church of Knowledge?
In the ruins of the mostly collapsed buildings, Wanak noticed Gusain's belly had swollen even more, looking increasingly like a woman about to give birth.
The belly started writhing as if something inside was trying to break free.
Wanak's gaze froze, immediately raising his hands and head towards the cloudy sky.
Dark clouds gathered quickly, and Morora's weather changed again.
Silver lightning snakes darted through the clouds, converging into a tree-like lightning bolt as thick as a bucket, striking down.
The terrifying lightning targeted Gusain and the baby inside him!
Gusain vanished, hiding in a ghostly wasteland.
But the silver "giant python" pursued him relentlessly, piercing through the void, striking his belly with unavoidable speed.
Bang!
The thunderclap woke the city's exiles.
The wasteland shattered like a mirror, revealing Gusain's blackened belly, emitting a burnt smell as he reappeared in the ruins.
Thud! A charred lump of flesh fell from his belly, struggled briefly, and then lay still.
Gusain froze, life force completely drained, and collapsed.
His flesh rapidly shriveled, turning him into a charred mummy, with large blood-colored blisters appearing on his body.
Another bolt of lightning, formed by countless silver snakes, struck the blistering Gusain.
Boom!
Gusain twitched a few times and died completely.
"Mom!" the iron soldier cried, running to Gusain, crouching down, and picking him up.
Julie seized the opportunity, reflecting the iron soldier in her mirror and covering it with Demoness black flames.
The iron soldier was instantly engulfed in black flames, burning from the inside out.
It stood up, wielding its white flaming spear, and charged at Wanak and Julie in a frenzy.
For a while, fireballs, Fire Ravens, mirror fragments, burning-

white spears, and burning rain appeared continuously, with explosions echoing non-stop.
As Julie prepared to escape using the Mirror Substitution, leaving Wanak to face the iron soldier alone, the iron soldier began to tremble.
Still burning with Demoness black flames, its legs seemed unable to support its body, showing signs of rust and melting.
Clang! Clang! Clang! Metal parts covered in black flames fell off its body.
Soon, the iron soldier turned into a pile of scrap metal.
Wanak, who had been struggling, sighed in relief and sneered at the iron soldier's remains. "All strength and no brains."
With that said, the most dangerous person in Morora then turned his head, looking at Julie a few meters away.
Julie's gaze first fell on his face, then moved down to his crotch.
The Demoness shook her head in disappointment, regretting adding the black flame curse to the iron soldier too early, missing the chance to see Wanak weakened.
Wanak squinted slightly as Julie smiled and retreated into the shadows.
At this moment, the enforcers finally arrived in the district.
...
In the fog-filled hollow, Albus stood in a corner, leaning against the brown rock wall, hair disheveled, clothes tattered, a white cigarette in his mouth.
The Medici descendant took a deep drag and muttered regretfully, "Nobody followed. I was hoping to give you a surprise..."
...
After the explosions subsided and the enforcers returned to the Church of Knowledge, Lumian left and headed for the Carnivore bar.
Archbishop Heraberg of Morora hadn't appeared, seemingly not on duty.
Lumian didn't hurry to sleep. He conjured a white flaming ball and continued reading the books related to 0-01 at a desk.
Soon, Julie returned and knocked on his door.
Lumian, suspending the white flaming ball, opened the shabby wooden door, seeing the neighboring Demoness with moist eyes and flushed cheeks, as if she had just finished some R21 activity.
She held a blood-colored object frozen in ice.
"Wanak's?" Lumian asked with a smile.
Julie sighed and shook her head. "No, I didn't get the chance."
She then accused Lumian, which was her reason for knocking in the middle of the night. "Why did you leave early? Together, we

could have cut off Wanak's thing!"
If I hadn't left, something you wouldn't want to see might have happened... Lumian chuckled. "I'm in a partnership with Wanak."
"Pui!" Julie scoffed in disbelief.
She turned and walked towards her room.
After a few steps, she turned back, smiling slyly at Lumian. "Hope you don't regret today's choice."

Chapter 818: Instigation

Don't regret today's choice... Lumian watched Julie's back as she entered her room, and he could guess what she meant by her earlier words:

You'll regret not killing Wanak today!

Julie must really place a lot of weight on Wanak... Does she think he'll affect the outcome of the underground mausoleum raid? Lumian muttered to himself, closing the door and returning to his desk.

He understood Julie's concern about Wanak. Earlier, Wanak had demonstrated his unique ability to manipulate Morora's weather, creating a hurricane powerful enough to disperse the war fog covering the entire district. From Lumian's later observations, Wanak had even summoned terrifying lightning strikes.

Although Lumian wasn't sure if these abilities had limitations, possibly relying on the current weather and only being able to guide it to similar conditions without causing drastic changes, Wanak's display still proved he was, in some ways, akin to a demigod.

Most importantly, with Lumian's understanding of 0-01's sealing information, if Wanak had truly submitted to 0-01, he should have exhibited some special abilities yet to be seen.

I remember the night Wanak was ambushed by Albus and Gusain, the weather was clear, while tonight it's very cloudy, suitable for wind, rain, thunder, and lightning... Lumian held a book borrowed from the Church of Knowledge but didn't read it as attentively as before. Instead, he thought carefully about the hidden details in Wanak's behavior.

After a while, Lumian silently laughed at Julie.

In the Demoness's eyes, tonight was indeed the best chance to hunt Wanak-he was severely injured, the iron soldier had near-demigod strength to engage in direct combat, Gusain had undergone a terrifying mutation with unknown abilities, and with Julie, the Demoness of Affliction, and Lumian himself, they had a good chance to permanently take Wanak down in the ruins.

But the problem was, if Lumian hadn't teleported away, he might have become the primary target of Gusain and the iron soldier. In that case, Julie would likely see it as a great opportunity to kill her boss and choose to collaborate with Wanak, assisting Gusain and the iron soldier.

Do you really think I'm that foolish? If Wanak is killed, with Medici heavily wounded and Gusain and the iron soldier destined to be cleaned up by the enforcers or the Church of Knowledge,

wouldn't the Demonesses become the sole dominant force? Then, facing their coercion or attacks, I wouldn't be able to find any temporary allies... Such a situation that could drastically change the power dynamics should wait until I finish reading the remaining books... Lumian muttered, adjusting the white flaming ball above his head so it wouldn't cast shadows on the pages.
After determining the whereabouts of the Abscessed Hand, he could focus more on his studies.
Before that, he thought about what Albus Medici and Julie intended to achieve in Morora.
With backing from gods or a King of Angels, they likely weren't just aiming to leave a mark on the terrifying Sealed Artifact, 0-01.
Internal and external coordination to directly steal 0-01? The Church of Knowledge is one of the seven major orthodox churches, it shouldn't be so easy to take their most important Grade 0 Sealed Artifact unless they intend to let it happen...
Relying solely on violent means is probably not feasible, or the Primordial Demoness and the Red Angel would have acted already...
Do they need 0-01 to undergo some change?
And while I have some clues on how to get close to 0-01, I have no idea how to leave a mark and gain its favor... Do I need to rely on the remnants of Alista Tudor's aura?
Or is it related to one of my previous speculations?
Lumian ended his thoughts and read for nearly another hour before lying down to sleep.
In Morora, he slept lightly, always on guard against potential attacks and the neighboring Demoness's "plague."
If he experienced symptoms like fever or cough, he would wake immediately and teleport to the Knowledge Cathedral to check his condition!
If it weren't for the accumulated negative effects of not sleeping for several days, he would rely on the automatic fatigue removal and spirituality restoration at six in the morning to stay up all night.
At the same time, this misled Julie and others-if they discovered he could stay energized without sleep, they might infer the changes occurring at six in the morning, preventing Lumian from utilizing this special refresh state to turn the tide at critical moments.
The next morning, Lumian deliberately lingered in bed for half an hour before waking up, brushing his teeth, washing up, and heading downstairs to enjoy the breakfast prepared by Lez.
Seven or eight minutes later, Julie returned from outside the bar.
Went out again last night? The Demoness is really good at hiding

her movements and whereabouts, it's impossible to track her or even know when she leaves her room... Lumian shifted his gaze back and sipped his milk.
Julie lightly went over to a high stool two seats away from Lumian and remained silent.
Lez glanced at her face, took out a small cake, and added some cream.
"Sweet food can help improve your mood," the Chef said simply, pushing the cream cake towards Julie.
Julie's expression twisted. "I don't need to improve my mood! I'm in a great mood!"
Oh, you're in a bad mood... Last night, you were in a good mood when you knocked on my door... Did something happen when you went out late at night? Lumian openly observed Julie for a few moments.
Lez said, "As a chef, I must accurately judge the current state of the ingredients to choose the most suitable cooking method."
Julie's eyes narrowed, losing any semblance of elegance.
She seemed ready to kill at any moment.
Based on previous observations, only Celeste, the other Demoness, can make Julie's state deteriorate rapidly and her emotions nearly lose control... Did the lovers have a fight? Hmm, my basic psychology knowledge tells me Julie seems more worried than sad. She didn't hide this... Worrying... Lumian placed his right hand on the Traveler's Bag, ready for the Demoness to lose control.
Almost simultaneously, he thought of a possibility.
As a member of the enforcers and a listed experimental subject, Celeste was sure to take shifts in the underground tomb or rotate to replace the puppet. For Celeste, who still retained some self-awareness, this was both an opportunity and a danger!
Julie went out to meet Celeste last night and learned that she would be entering the underground mausoleum soon, possibly returning as a fully controlled experimental subject without self-awareness? No wonder Julie is so worried, her mood deteriorating... Lumian chuckled with understanding.
"What are you laughing at?" Julie glared at him coldly.
Lumian smiled and sighed. "It might be fine this time, but what about next time, or the time after? If you don't solve the root of the problem, one day you'll face an outcome you don't want to accept."
Julie's eyes flickered as she stared at the cream cake, silent for a long time.
When Lumian wiped his mouth and prepared to leave, she frowned slightly and asked, "How much do you know?"
Lumian responded with a smile, *"Why don't you take a guess?*

Maybe I know nothing, and your expression gave me the answer."
With that, Lumian climbed the stairs, leaving Julie staring blankly.
...
Trier, Avenue du Boulevard, 6 Rue Belfort.
In the four-story townhouse late at night, after Muggle left, Periodic Table and others circled back, reuniting with the Associate Professor couple in the living room.
Glancing at the darkness outside the window, Periodic Table sighed. "Is it really okay to put on such an act in front of Muggle?"
"We didn't deceive her; we just hoped to elicit her sympathy." Professor sighed. "The disappearance of Pillar Kmerolo, Nikila suspected of being the Mirror Person, and the increasingly erratic actions of the Hidden Sage have trapped us in a predicament, difficult to escape on our own.
After surviving the April Fool's plot, Muggle has become increasingly mysterious, clearly backed by a powerful force.
"Fortunately, she's still kind. Even though she might have noticed something off, she still informed us that divine power lingers in the underground catacombs and agreed to deal with Nikila."
Associate Professor patted his wife's shoulder to comfort her.
Casting a sweeping glance around, he said, "Not just for ourselves, but for those we care about, we must survive."
Periodic Table gave a self-mocking smile. "Half a year ago, I never thought we'd end up like this. How did the powerful and secretive Moses Ascetic Order end up in such a state?"
...
The next morning, Franca received a reply from Madam Judgment after breakfast.
"The operation against Nikila of the Moses Ascetic Order can commence as soon as possible.
"The high-ranking members of the Moses Ascetic Order are already aware of Kmerolos disappearance. Another Pillar will arrive in Trier soon to handle this, but it won't affect your mission against Nikila, if he is indeed the Mirror Person, Griffith."
The Moses Ascetic Order knows Kmerolo is missing? *How did they find out so quickly?* Was it because of my report or did they just notice something? Hmm, our Tarot Club's mole in the Moses Ascetic Order seems to be quite high-ranking, able to provide intel about the arrival of a Pillar and the judgment that it won't affect our mission against Nikila...
Such a certain judgment... *Could that Pillar be one of our Tarot Club members?* Hmm... Franca pondered, growing more curious the more she thought about it.

Chapter 819: Subteam Operation

In the evening, in Trier, at 35 Rue Saint-Nornez in Quartier 20, known for its public cemetery.

In different states of invisibility, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony stood outside Room 6 on the fifth floor, checking the details of the environment and making final preparations for their operation.

According to the information provided by Periodic Table, Nikila, a suspected member of the Moses Ascetic Order and possibly a Mirror Person, was an ordinary employee of a grain company, living a very regular life, leaving home punctually every day and returning on time.

The only unusual thing about Nikila was that, despite being in his mid-thirties, he was still unmarried, citing severe intermittent migraines as the reason why women found him unappealing.

When Franca read this information, she immediately thought, This matches the characteristic of Mystery Pryers continuously influenced by the evil god, Hidden Sage... Could it be that Mirror People of the Mystery Pryer pathway are also infused with knowledge by the Hidden Sage?

Recalling the content of the dossier, Franca emerged from her invisibility state and created a layer of frost, making it seep into the keyhole and freeze solid.

As a result, she produced a crystalline key and easily opened Nikila's door.

Taking advantage of the fact that this ordinary employee hadn't yet returned home from work, Franca took out a mirror and began divination to avoid any traps or warning setups that might be in the apartment.

"Bedroom, living room, and guest room all have full-length mirrors, and there are up to fifteen or sixteen portable mirrors. If you're not a Mirror Person, who would believe that?" Franca mumbled to herself, checking the room twice.

She was also conveying the collected information to Jenna and Anthony outside the door.

Of course, there was another possibility for so many mirrors, which was that Nikila was a Demoness. However, it was obvious that this individual was not an exceptionally attractive female, nor even a female at all.

Franca went to the full-length mirror in the living room, looked at Jenna and Anthony's figures in the hallway, and said, "I'll ambush behind this mirror. Follow the plan to force the target into this mirror. If he can use the mirror world, we can confirm he's the Mirror Person, Griffith."

As she spoke, black flames quietly burned around the room, erasing traces left by the previous search.
Jenna nodded slightly and specifically reminded, "Be careful of an ambush behind the mirror, like the one Lumian encountered before."
"Don't worry. Magic Mirror Divination told me there's no ambush. Of course, I won't fully trust and rely on divination. I'll stay vigilant." Franca felt Jenna's concern, smiling as she took out the Seven-Stone Bracelet from the Traveler's Bag, now with only two diamonds left, and tossed it outside.
As she threw it, she couldn't help but mutter in her heart, Out with the old, in with the new, out with the old, in with the new...
Once Jenna caught the Seven-Stone Bracelet, Franca reiterated, "After confirming Nikila enters this mirror, you both immediately teleport away, using that fixed entrance to the mirror world to assist me."
"No problem," Anthony replied, wearing gloves, closing the apartment door, and warming the lock area, which had become icy from the cold key.
This was to prevent Nikila from sensing the residual cold and suspecting anything amiss when he opened the door.
Once Jenna and Anthony left, Franca took out the Ice Amulet, hanging it around her neck.
Then she placed her palm against the full-length mirror in the living room.
With a flash of cold light, she silently passed through the glass.
Behind the mirror was void, a spider-web-like deep dark tunnel filled Franca's vision.
Keeping a close watch on the surroundings, Franca breathed a sigh of relief and murmured, No ambush.
Confirming this, she leaned closer to the mirror, peering through the glass into the apartment's living room: Nikila had not yet returned, and outside, the dusk was eerily quiet.
Franca's nerves instinctively tightened. She raised her right hand, rubbed her temples, and sighed.
It would be great if Lumian were here...
This operation was proposed and perfected by her, killing many of her brain cells and making her responsible for achieving the goal without severely harming Jenna and Anthony. She couldn't relax at all.
In the past, Lumian bore these burdens and responsibilities. She only needed to question and use her imagination to complete her part of the task.
Sigh, being a team leader is exhausting, no chance to slack off...

Franca composed herself and patiently waited.
In the café diagonally across from 35 Rue Saint-Nornez.
Jenna, now a girl in a black dress with her hood removed, sat by the window, chatting with Anthony about various Trier anecdotes.
Suddenly, she propped her left elbow on the table, using her palm to press down her original flaxen hair, her voice dropping slightly.
"The target is back."
Anthony, while acting attracted to the beautiful woman opposite, glanced with his peripheral vision at the apartment building.
A double-decker public carriage had stopped by the roadside, and a man in his thirties wearing a black wool coat and a half-high silk top hat got off.
The man was nearly six feet tall, walked steadily, had a thin face with distinct features, and rare deep black eyes.
It's definitely Nikila... Anthony nodded slightly to Jenna, confirming she hadn't mistaken the target.
Jenna then straightened her head, withdrew her left hand, and glanced at the cuckoo clock on the café wall.
She smiled lightly at Anthony and said, "Three minutes to go."
She meant that in three minutes, the operation would officially start.
The reason for waiting three more minutes in the café was to avoid Nikila's instinctual investigation as a Mystery Pryer after returning home.
This was a detail discussed and decided by Franca, Jenna, and Anthony.
...
Nikila, wearing a half-high silk top hat, walked step by step up to the fifth floor and stopped outside Room 6.
He didn't open the door immediately but raised his right hand and rubbed his temples.
Then he closed his eyes briefly and reopened them, his pupils now a deep purple with a mysterious aura.
Eye of Mystery Prying!
Usually, Nikila used special Warlock spells to weaken the effect of the Eye of Mystery Prying to avoid sudden death, but it couldn't be completely sealed. Now, he was using it to its full potential to observe the surroundings inside and outside the room.
Bugs on the ceiling, hairs in the cracks, the neighbor cooking in front of the coal stove, dust floating in the air, children running up and down the stairs, rats hiding in the shadows, pedestrians passing by on the streets -all these scenes overlapped in Nikila's deep purple eyes.
At the same time, he saw shadowy curtains around him and dark

aqueous light on the surfaces of all mirrors.
Before the gaze behind the shadowy curtain could become more pronounced, Nikila ended his observation abruptly, closing his eyes.
He knew if he continued looking, something unpredictable might happen, filling him with fear.
Phew... The Eye of Mystery Prying is truly dangerous. Listeners on the Secrets Suppliant pathway hear things, we see things, and both are equally likely to encounter the forbidden and die mysteriously... Nikila muttered, pulling out a brown leather scroll from an inner pocket of his black wool coat, softly chanting a word in Hermes-"Myopia."
The scroll immediately ignited with black flames, quickly turning to ash.
The mysterious deep purple in Nikila's eyes faded into the black depths of his pupils.
After doing this, Nikila took out his key and opened the door.
He had confirmed there were no suspicious individuals or enemies hiding in the shadows, nor were there any signs of abnormalities around the apartment or the street.
Entering the living room, closing the door behind him, Nikila unbuttoned the top of his wool coat and white shirt, relaxing on the sofa with his arms stretched out.
Franca, watching from behind the full-length mirror, took advantage of Nikila's forward movement to grab a beer from the coffee table, extending her right hand slightly through the mirror, pressing it tightly against the glass.
When Nikila sat back on the sofa, Franca immediately withdrew her hand.
Gulping beer, Nikila read the newspapers he had brought back, behaving like any ordinary employee.
Time passed slowly, and as three minutes elapsed, Jenna and Anthony left the café, turning into a nearby secluded alley, preparing both their shadow hiding and Psychological Invisibility techniques.
They quickly returned to the target apartment and hid in their prearranged positions.
At this time, Nikila was still reading the newspapers, considering whether to go out for dinner or cook something simple.
Suddenly, Nikila's throat felt dry and itchy, as if he hadn't drunk water for a long time.
He coughed once and thought, I drank half a bottle of beer, why is my throat so dry?
As this thought crossed his mind, he couldn't help but cough again.

Immediately, a strong sense of unease washed over him.
Something's wrong!
Just as Nikila became alert, Jenna, hearing two consecutive coughs from the target through the wall, emerged from the shadows without hesitation. With her hood still on, she inserted the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty into her own heart.
Her flaxen hair seemed to lengthen slightly, her contours became more refined, and her facial features more stunning.
Previously, Jenna's beauty highlighted her feminine charm, an expression of femininity. Now, her beauty seemed to become a more independent concept, alluring by sheer virtue of its existence.
Through the door, she made the shadows beneath Nikila's feet and the surrounding darkness coalesce into illusory yet solid black chains, wrapping around the target.

Chapter 820: Walking into a Trap

As Jenna used the Abyss Shackles spell from the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty, shadows and darkness came to life beside the coughing Nikila. Under the yellowish light of the gas wall lamp, they coalesced into black chains that wrapped around the Moses Ascetic Order member, binding him firmly in place, even sealing his mouth.

Nikila, experienced in combat, immediately formed a slowly rotating mass of stardust in his right palm. The light in the room dimmed as if night had fallen outside.

In the dimness, numerous bright stars appeared, not densely packed but numerous enough.

They cast beams of light that converged into a thick column, illuminating the entire room and enveloping Nikila.

The black chains formed by the Abyss Shackles disintegrated like shadows meeting sunlight, and Nikila dissolved rapidly in the light column, shattering into countless glass shards.

Mirror Substitution!

Using his unique abilities, Nikila escaped the Abyss Shackles by attacking himself. As a Mystery Pryer pathway Beyonder, many of his spells required incantations. With his mouth sealed, his abilities were significantly limited.

As a result, Jenna confirmed that Nikila was a Mirror Person.

Black fog emanated from her back, growing into a pair of large, illusory bat wings.

These Wings of Darkness transformed into a swarm of palm-sized, insubstantial vampire bats that flew through the walls and door towards the newly freed Nikila.

Meanwhile, Anthony ended his Psychological Invisibility, kicking open the door while aiming a complex, mechanically beautiful black revolver at Nikila.

Winter is Coming!

Anthony was preparing to use the Certain Death effect of this Beyonder weapon.

He didn't intend to actually use it because Nikila's Mirror Substitution ability could prematurely activate, causing the deadly bullet to hit the mirror instead.

Anthony's current objective was to use a Warlock's acute spirituality warnings and mystery-prying eyes to make Nikila feel his life was in danger, forcing him to escape through the mirror world.

According to Franca, Nikila, likely a Sequence 5 Constellations Master from the Mystery Pryer pathway and possibly a Mirror

Person, would undoubtedly sense the danger of the Winter is Coming revolver and recognize its godhood-possessing attack.
To genuinely trigger the target's spirituality warning, Anthony needed to complete a psychological suggestion on himself, a simple task for a Hypnotist.
Thus, Anthony was genuinely planning to shoot, fully intending to use the Certain Death effect. However, when his finger began to pull the trigger, it would activate the preset psychological warning, canceling the suggestion and allowing him to fire a normal bullet.
Just as Franca predicted, the moment Nikila saw the Winter is Coming revolver, a hint of deep purple appeared in his pitch-black eyes, reflecting the weapon's decaying aura.
He instantly felt a creeping sense of death, his throat itching more intensely, and a weakness spreading through his body.
This wasn't an effect of Winter is Coming but a backlash from seeing the secret of the Beyonder weapon, combined perfectly with the pathogen Franca spread when she extended her hand through the mirror, worsening Nikila's condition.
Without considering further, Nikila immediately let a mirror substitute himself.
Bang!
Anthony pulled the trigger, firing a yellow bullet with only a disease effect, which, along with the swarm of vampire bats, hit Nikila, causing a shattering sound.
Nikila, now visible in another corner of the room, had no intention of counterattacking. His only thought was to flee immediately.
This was partly because he was unsure if there were more attackers and partly because the gun's danger kept him on high alert.
Unable to assess the situation clearly and knowing the enemy had a demigod-level weapon, he had no choice but to escape.
Nikila quickly lunged towards the nearest mirror, aiming to use the mirror world to escape the battle.
Noticing his move, Jenna slowed her attacks, while Anthony's eyes turned gold, displaying spiraling whirlpools that seemed to penetrate the soul.
Battle Hypnotism!
This spell forcibly hypnotized an enemy during combat, making them perform abnormal actions, but it could not directly harm the hypnotized and didn't last long.
Anthony's intent was only to make Nikila switch mirrors, delaying his escape without directly endangering him.
Nikila hesitated, suddenly feeling the mirror might hide a dangerous trap.

He quickly pulled out a scroll with gold foil from the inside pocket of his black wool coat and softly chanted a Hermes word, "Sun!"
The scroll was instantly consumed by golden flames, erupting into blinding sunlight that turned all the vampire bats to smoke.
This severely affected Jenna and Anthony's vision, their eyes filled with dazzling sunlight.
Nikila seized the moment, rolling towards the full-length mirror in the living room and diving in.
From the start of Battle Hypnotism to his escape, it took only two or three seconds.
The sunlight quickly faded, and Anthony nodded at Jenna.
Jenna immediately grabbed her companion's shoulder, activating the Seven-Stone Bracelet on her left wrist.
One of the two remaining diamonds burst into clear light, enveloping them both.
In the next second, Jenna and Anthony teleported to the quarry chamber with the fixed mirror world entrance, pressing their hands against the protruding rock.
...
Nikila, just entering the void and dark area behind the mirror, couldn't help but cough.
The disease he had contracted couldn't be removed by Mirror Substitution.
Cough! Cough! Cough! As he coughed violently, he felt invisible threads binding his body layer by layer.
Spider webs from a Demoness? Nikila shuddered.
Jenna had been deliberately using the Arrow of the Bloodthirsty to attack this Mirror Person to hide her identity as a Demoness, preventing Nikila from suspecting he was being targeted by Demonesses.
Otherwise, he would suspect a trap behind the mirror, abandoning the mirror world escape plan and rendering Anthony's Battle Hypnotism ineffective.
As his pupils dilated, Nikila reflexively formed a slowly rotating mass of stardust in his right palm.
Before he could use his Constellations Master abilities to destroy himself and the Demoness webs in this area, he felt invisible threads lightly caressing him, from his ears and face to his chest and inner thighs, teasing and scratching with seductive touches.
This instantly sent his blood surging, his thoughts sinking deep to his nether regions.
As he struggled to regain control and use his abilities, he saw a figure at the edge of the web-like tunnel.
The figure wore a black robe with leather armor, the hood askew,

revealing a pair of heroic and beautiful eyebrows, clear bright eyes like lake water, and moist red lips.
This indescribable beauty and soul-stirring charm made Nikila instinctively hold his breath, forgetting to resist, forgetting to break free.
Demoness of Affliction's Charm!
The intense danger warning allowed Nikila to barely break free from this bewitching beauty. Clenching his teeth, suppressing the desire from the teasing and seductive touches, he was about to activate the stardust whirlpool in his hand.
Franca continued her Charm, a slight smile on her lips, stunning Nikila while changing the action of some webs. They started tickling him!
"Ha... ha... ha!" Sensitive spots on his neck, armpits, and waist were attacked, making him laugh uncontrollably, tears streaming down his face.
If not for the invisible threads binding him tightly, he would have retreated, twisted his body, or rolled on the ground.
In this state, it was nearly impossible for Nikila to use any of his abilities.
Of course, his desire also faded because of this.
Right now, I really do feel like a black widow spider, methodically dealing with prey caught in its web... At the Demoness of Affliction stage, if the prey is truly ensnared without help, they'll be constantly affected, unable to escape by their own means... It's a pity this doesn't work on Hunters; they can ignite flames to burn the web... I wonder when I'll be able to directly transmit genuine pleasure through the webs... Franca maintained her vigilance, watching the frantically laughing Nikila, muttering to herself.
Her strategy was clear: restrain the enemy, continually interfere with his efforts, and delay him until his illness flared up or he was completely charmed.
During this process, even if Nikila used Mirror Substitution, he would be limited by the distance, with his body reappearing within the area covered by the Demoness webs, repeating the initial experience.
Previously, Franca had already turned this place into a Demoness's nest.
On one side, he was continuously tickled, while on the other, his desire was stoked by teasing touches. Nikila oscillated between hell and paradise, in extreme agony.
The beautiful figure, seemingly forever out of reach, became a symbol of all his hopes and dreams.
Nikila knew he couldn't continue like this. Resolving to endure the

laughter, he bit his tongue hard.
The pain pierced his mind, momentarily freeing him from all influences.
He tightened his grip on the stardust whirlpool.
In the void and darkness behind the mirror, one brilliant star after another lit up.

Chapter 821: Infatuation

Above the dark and low void of the mirror world, numerous brilliant stars shed beams of clear light.

These beams converged into a column of light, illuminating the mirror world and engulfing Franca, the Demoness webs, and Nikila himself.

Franca and Nikila both shattered into countless mirror fragments. These shards, along with the invisible webs, quickly dissolved into nothing under the starlight.

The starlight quickly faded, and Nikila and Franca's figures reappeared in different corners of the mirror world.

Seeing the entrance to the tunnel of webs now unobstructed, Nikila felt a surge of joy. He pulled out a dark gray scroll from the inner pocket of his black wool coat.

Suppressing the urge to cough, he whispered a Hermes word, "Wind!"

The dark gray scroll instantly ignited with cyan flames, a roaring wind gathering around Nikila, pushing his feverish and muddled thoughts forward at the speed of the wind toward one of the dark tunnels.

Nikila, seizing the moment before Franca could intervene, followed the wind into the tunnel entrance.

However, he didn't feel the familiar pull from other mirrors.

He was back where he started.

The dark, illusory tunnel wasn't open to him!

Mirror Maze!

After becoming a Demoness of Affliction, Franca's mirror magic had evolved, allowing her to create scene illusions with pre-set mirrors.

While waiting for Jenna and Anthony to act, she had woven invisible webs, spread pathogens, and placed mirrors at multiple tunnel entrances.

These mirrors, influenced by Beyonder powers, reflected each other, creating a mirror maze that hid the real tunnel entrances, showing only their reflections.

Nikila had chosen a false target, the reflection of a real tunnel, and naturally couldn't escape.

Taking advantage of this gap, Franca wove another web, ensnaring Nikila, wrapping him in layers, either making him blush or laugh uncontrollably.

Having experienced this before, Nikila didn't let himself get completely entangled. Using his abilities as a Constellations Master, he broke free once again.

In the following time, amidst increasing fever and violent coughing, he barely managed to fend off Franca using scrolls and attempted to destroy the mirrors creating the maze, seeking the real exit.
Under Warlock attacks and interference from spells like wind blades, lightning, flashes, purification, freezing, and paralysis, Franca kept changing positions, sometimes using Mirror Substitution to block an attack, showing great patience and restraint.
Her focus was on maintaining the Demoness webs and spreading pathogens, using her Demoness of Affliction's Charm to buy time.
Gradually, Nikila felt he shouldn't resist or harm the beautiful lady.
His breath grew hot, his heart racing either from the pathogens or her every move, pounding as if to leap from his chest.
The immense pressure made him suspect he might suffer a heart attack any second.
Without hesitation, he pulled out a scroll etched with lightning patterns from his coat's inner pocket.
It was a powerful item he bought from a Broker.
"Storm!" Just as he finished chanting, Nikila started coughing violently, and the scroll erupted into a dazzling silver light.
The silver light expanded, filling the mirror world with a thunderstorm, the accompanying wind pushing lightning into the tunnel entrances, shattering the mirrors Franca had placed.
With the sound of breaking glass, Franca's figure shattered, the mirror maze collapsed, revealing the true dark tunnels.
Nikila had no time to celebrate. Aided by the scroll's spell, dragging his sick body, he dashed toward the nearest tunnel entrance.
He had scrolls with some healing effects but didn't want to miss the chance to escape.
Seeing the tunnel entrance within reach and the attacking Demoness reappearing in another corner, Nikila's heart surged with hope.
At that moment, he saw two figures in the tunnel entrance out of the corner of his eye.
Jenna and Anthony, who had teleported using the last diamond of the Seven-Stone Bracelet, had arrived and been lying in wait.
During the brief and weakened storm, both had been struck by lightning but evaded the worst damage using Mirror Substitution- one from her own ability, the other from the Mirror Substitution created by the two Demonesses.
Seizing this chance, Anthony's eyes turned gold, radiating a dragon-like aura.

Awe!
Fear and panic surged in Nikila's heart, leaving him disoriented, as if facing an unbeatable predator.
Seeing the target pause and turn in circles, Jenna threw a handful of black powder and chanted a few Hermes words.
It was one of a Witch's black magic spells.
Due to their need for materials and incantations, Jenna rarely used these in combat, opting for the convenience of frost and black flames.
The black powder ignited, and a cold wind rose, surrounding Nikila with ghostly figures pressing against him, covering his mouth and nose.
With this dual interference, Franca's Demoness webs wove again, sticking Nikila in place.
Franca smiled sincerely at the Mirror Person.
With a buzz, Nikila felt his blood split, half surging upward, half downward, his heart seeming to stop.
Under repeated Charms and his severe illness, he could no longer resist Franca's allure.
In a daze, Nikila saw the woman, whose every detail fit his aesthetic, beckon to him and offer a transparent triangular spike symbolizing goodwill and control.
I wholeheartedly accept... With this thought, Nikila didn't question why the webs no longer restricted him. He reached out and grasped the triangular spike, feeling a slight sting.
His thoughts froze completely, becoming as sluggish and stiff as rusted machine parts.
Wintry Blade!
With Nikila under control, Franca glanced at Jenna, signaling her to find and destroy the remaining mirrors on him.
Then, Franca could form an ice spike and perform a lobotomy on Nikila.
With Lumian absent, there was no one to use the ritual leather for the Animal Creation Spell to turn Nikila into a large hound.
Jenna nodded slightly, cutting off the lower half of Nikila's right sleeve, and quickly took off his black wool coat. She swiftly found the remaining five mirrors and smashed them one by one.
During this process, Nikila did not resist. He looked at Franca with a mixture of obsession and pain, coughing intermittently.
He still held the Wintry Blade, blood trickling from his hand.
Franca's left hand formed a long, thin ice spike.
Suddenly, Nikila's expression twisted.
Knowledge infusion from the Hidden Sage? Dammit, why now?
Franca was first stunned, then understood the reason.

In his severely ill and dying state, Nikila was unlikely to withstand this.
He might lose control on the spot!
In a flash, Franca discarded the ice spike and the Wintry Blade, taking out a mirror that reflected Nikila's image. She then wiped the glass surface with her right hand, covered in eerie black flames.
Nikila's exposed skin was marked with numerous blood-red cracks, with strange things forming inside them.
At that moment, pitch-black flames erupted from his body, burning his soul.
Using the blood dripping from Nikila's hand, Jenna began a curse, while Anthony aimed the Winter is Coming revolver at Nikila, ready to use the Certain Death effect at any moment.
Soon, the two Demonesses acted before Nikila could lose control, ending his life completely.
Silently, Nikila fell to the void and dark ground of the mirror world, becoming a corpse.
The eye-like objects hidden within his flesh stopped moving, unable to emerge.
Franca quickly set up a ritual, completing the Magic Mirror Divination.
In her makeup mirror, Nikila's eerie, pale figure appeared, showing only slight signs of losing control.
The ghost's eyes still held a trace of obsession with Franca but now included the pain and despair of being killed by her.
A Demoness of Affliction's Charm is terrifying... I wonder if Baby Cupid from the Scrooge pathway can make someone fall hopelessly in love with them too... Franca mused with a sigh and then asked, "Are you Griffith?"
"Yes, I am very pleased you know and remember my true name." The mirror's Nikila smiled joyfully.
".." Franca was momentarily speechless.
She paused for a second before asking, "Do you know what happened to your superior, Kmerolo, one of the Ten Pillars?"

Chapter 822: Wilderness

Nikila looked at Franca with an obsession and said, "He should be feeling the call of the wilderness."

"Wilderness?" Franca didn't hide her confusion.

Nikila eagerly and thoroughly explained, "In Fourth Epoch Trier, near the ruined palace of Alista Tudor, beside His remains-no, on His remains, no, under them-well, there's a wilderness there. All Mystery Pryers and Savants will eventually return to that wilderness."

All Mystery Pryers and Savants... The only thing powerful enough to influence both pathways must be the Celestial Master. Professor and Assistant Professor had dreams about the wilderness before... Franca perked up and asked, "What else do you know about this wilderness?"

Nikila shook his head slightly, looking a bit annoyed but very honest.

"Nothing else. According to our leader, the higher the sequence of a Mystery Pryer or Savant, the more likely they are to hear the call of the wilderness."

The Hidden Sage should stand atop the Mystery Pryer pathway, so during the Hostel incident, when the seal of Fourth Epoch Trier was broken, the leak of wilderness power greatly affected Him, driving Him madder. Is Kmerolo in a similar situation? After all, he's in Trier... The demigods of the Church of the God of Steam and Machinery in Trier might also be affected? Franca swallowed and asked, "Has Kmerolo returned to that wilderness?"

Nikila smiled gently but painfully.

"Not yet. He's probably just deteriorating, unable to maintain himself well, and resisting the call in some extreme way. If he were to return, he'd have to pass through our mirror world. It wouldn't escape our leader's notice. If our leader knew, so would I."

For Trier, Kmerolo returning to the wilderness might not be a bad thing. According to Nikila-no, Griffith-Kmerolo is like a powerful bomb that could go off at any time... Franca thought for a moment and asked, "Do you know where he's hiding now?"

Nikila sighed and said, "He hasn't contacted me for a while. The last time we met was near the catacombs."

Near the catacombs... Franca then asked, "Griffith, what was your goal in infiltrating the Moses Ascetic Order?"

Nikila emphasized seriously, "I am the original. Our goal was to make the higher-ups of the Moses Ascetic Order gradually aware of the wilderness and help us unseal Fourth Epoch Trier at a critical moment."

Franca had an epiphany and asked, "Did Kmerolo, with your 'help,' already know about the wilderness and its exact location?"
Was it knowing too much and possessing godhood that made Kmerolo lose control gradually, becoming unable to resist the wilderness call?
The Church of the God of Steam and Machinery hasn't shown similar issues, at least not as severe...
"Yes." Nikila shared his feelings with his dream lover. "So, this is both good and bad for me. It took me a lot to gain Kmerolo's trust and interest in the wilderness without arousing suspicion, but now all that effort is wasted. I have to figure out how to gain the trust of another of the Ten Pillars."
"Why is it also a good thing?" Franca was puzzled.
Nikila smiled and said, "If Kmerolo returns to the wilderness, I might get the Mysticologist Beyonder characteristic someday."
"Mysticologist is Sequence 4 of the Mystery Pryer pathway? Can you Mirror People ascend by drinking potions?" Franca quickly asked two questions.
Nikila nodded. "Yes, I can ascend to Mysticologist by drinking the potion. I am the original."
"Have you ever drunk a potion?" Franca glanced at Griffith's body, which had not produced any Beyonder characteristics.
"No," Nikila replied candidly.
Meh, no Beyonder characteristic drops... Franca cursed inwardly in pre-transmigration gaming terms and then said, "Moran Avigny has been dead for a while. Your leader can't leave the seal and frequently get feedback or give orders. Who's handling day-to-day matters and contacting the Mirror People in Trier?"
"It's Palia. She received instructions and information from the leader," Nikila replied but didn't elaborate like before.
The mineralogist, Jasmine, I'm tracking... No wonder she appeared twice in Underground Trier despite being wanted... She's rebuilding the Mirror People network in Trier? Franca asked quickly, "*Can you contact Palia?*"
Nikila shook his head again. "She contacts us one-way for now. This way, if any one of us is exposed, it doesn't affect the others. According to the previous arrangement, Palia contacts me through the mirror world once a week to check on my situation and exchange new information, usually on Sunday evenings between eight and ten."
Don't you find this troublesome and inconvenient? Well, it is quite safe...
Franca criticized silently and saw Nikila's image fading, about to disappear, and quickly asked the last question, "Besides Fourth

Epoch Trier and current Trier, where else does your mirror world connect to?"
This question came from Lumian's letter.
He confirmed Morora exchanged information with the outside world through this special mirror world.
Nikila thought for a moment and said, "A strange place, much like Fourth Epoch Trier, also sealed, with many living people inside, but we can't enter."
Mirror People can't use the special mirror world to go directly to Morora...
Franca nodded slightly and asked, "Did some of your companions go to Lenburg to find that sealed strange place?"
"Yes, although we can't go directly, if we can enter normally, we can use the mirror world's power..." Nikila said as he began to lose his soul's integrity.
He looked at Franca, lingeringly and painfully scanning her beautiful face.
Franca's skin prickled with goosebumps.
Watching Nikila-the Mirror Person Griffith-disappear completely, Franca sighed inwardly.
Short-term, high-intensity, high-frequency Charm can last so long. It might take a day or two to fade...
Repeated Charm in daily life, maintained long-term, can indeed make someone fall deeply in love with me... I wonder how long this love lasts without supernatural influence. A year should be fine, but it's hard to say for the seven-year itch...
Heh, Hunters can form teams, and so can Demonesses. But the loyalty and rapport will be higher. The only issue is team members might not truly cooperate and could hate each other... What a mess...
Franca put away the mirror and said to Jenna and Anthony, "No need to wait. This guy doesn't have any Beyonder characteristics."
By then, Jenna had finished collecting the loot, getting 460 verl d'or and nine scrolls from Nikila.
The scrolls' effects and incantations required Magic Mirror Divination to reveal.
Anthony glanced at Nikila's body and the nine scrolls, considering.
"Should we have someone use Lie to disguise as Nikila and wait for that Mirror Person Palia to contact?"
"We can, but it's unlikely," Franca said after some thought. "We can bury the body and carry out anti-divination and anti-prophecy measures, but there are many days until Sunday. The Mirror People leader might notice something wrong. Still, it's worth a try."
After carrying out anti-divination and anti-prophecy measures

and seeing Nikila's body turn into a few broken mirror shards, Jenna frowned slightly. "Still none of those special mirror world shards."
Moran Avigny didn't leave any either.
The shards in Jenna and Franca's possession came from Gardner Martin and the Tamara family's crypt.
"What kind of Mirror Person leaves special mirror world shards? What's special about the fake Martin? Next time we catch a Mirror Person, we must ask..." Franca muttered to herself.
The three quickly tidied up the scene, and Franca activated the Ice Amulet to teleport to the fixed mirror world entrance.
During this process, Franca used the amulet's power to send Lumian the intelligence gathered from this operation.
...
Morora, second floor of the Carnivore bar.
Reading a book comfortably, Lumian glanced at the room's mirror, seeing water ripple and a line of Intisian appear.
Reading it, Lumian suddenly froze.
He realized he had overlooked something.
At this moment, could the Mirror People sent to Lenburg to investigate the whereabouts of 0-01 have infiltrated Morora?
And the Mirror People produced by the underground mausoleum's incident could use that special mirror world unlike him!

Chapter 823: Advice

If the Mirror People have infiltrated Morora, what would they do?
Lumian pondered for a while, placed the book back in the Traveler's Bag, and stepped down the stairs to the hall.
It was dinner time, and the bar was bustling. Julie flitted between tables like a butterfly, serving drinks and meals to the customers.
The patrons were well-behaved; no one tried to act inappropriately by grabbing Julie's ass or touching her chest.
They weren't being moral or civilized. None of them had clean hands; those who entered Morora were all hardened criminals. Their compliance was because someone had made a fatal mistake not long ago: Julie had been unstable lately, often in a daze. Unlike her usual self, she couldn't always gracefully avoid wandering hands and arms amidst the laughter and noise. One evening, someone found an opportunity to give her a hard pinch in the ass.
Julie's suppressed fury and rage exploded instantly.
If Lumian hadn't intervened in time, reminding her it wasn't a legal duel, that drunkard would have ended up in the kitchen missing a vital part of his anatomy.
In the end, since the drunkard refused Julie's duel challenge, after much "negotiation," he "voluntarily" chopped off his hand as an apology.
Otherwise, he might have lost control and attacked the repugnant bar owner, forcing him into self-defense.
Lumian glanced at Julie, whose face was devoid of smiles, and walked into the kitchen, where Lez was finally taking a break, enjoying his dinner.
He picked up a caramelized finger, put it in his mouth, and chewed noisily.
Lumian sighed quietly and said, "I need to step out for a bit. Keep an eye on Julie."
"No problem," Lez replied, pointing to the plate of now-missing fingers.
"Boss, want some? I've found a new cooking method-first deep-fry, then steam in a seasoned broth for twenty minutes."
"No, thanks." Lumian turned and left the Carnivore bar, walking through the dark, unlit streets to the Knowledge Cathedral.
He found a corner where he could see the graveyard and the entrance to the underground mausoleum through a window. Pulling over a wooden chair, he sighed and patted the backrest.
The Church of Knowledge is getting more considerate...
There hadn't been chairs by the brass bookshelves before.
Too bad there's nowhere to rest my feet. Lumian sat down, gazing

at the graveyard through the stained glass, using the crimson moonlight to observe the entrance to the underground mausoleum.
According to his information, Celeste, who had been on duty in the underground mausoleum for two days, would return to the surface at nine tonight.
Lumian's goal was to make others believe he was at the Knowledge Cathedral to study while actually observing the mausoleum's entrance and the experimental subjects' activities.
His true purpose was simple: to mask his love of studying with the guise of observing the mausoleum and experimental subjects.
With this excuse, he wouldn't have to waste time idling around the bar, drinking and boasting. He could finish the remaining books sooner.
By the cathedral's bright candlelight, Lumian read for a while, then forced himself to lift his head and observe the mausoleum's entrance for a couple of minutes.
After repeating this several times, he suddenly thought of his sister.
Back then, Aurore always urged him to study but would occasionally drag him from his desk, forcing him to look at the trees outside the window and the distant mountain pastures.
Now, he had to rely on himself.
Time passed, and the cathedral's clock chimed loudly.
A group of black-robed enforcers left the Knowledge Cathedral, crossed the graveyard, and reached the mausoleum's entrance.
Soon, the previous group of enforcers emerged from the gray-white stone steps leading to the mausoleum, moving in an orderly fashion.
With his Hunter's vision and the crimson moonlight, Lumian saw that the leader was Celeste, wearing a black robe and a blindfold.
The Demoness emerged from the entrance area slowly and expressionlessly, removing her blindfold.
The line behind her was long, each person carrying a lantern.
At that moment, Lumian felt a sudden, eerie sensation as if the deep darkness at the mausoleum's entrance had come to life.
The darkness instantly swallowed the last experimental subject in line.
Lumian blinked, seeing no movement in the darkness. The anomaly seemed like an illusion.
Frowning slightly, he counted Celeste's team members again.
Quickly, he concluded, One person is missing... and one lantern...
Lumian watched Celeste's team until they returned to the Knowledge Cathedral.

Near the stairs, Celeste turned her head slightly, glancing in Lumian's direction.
Lumian crossed his right leg over his left knee, leaning back in the chair, calmly meeting her gaze.
He felt Celeste had likely noticed his observation.
This meant she probably still retained some self-awareness.
Phew, no need to worry about Julie losing control for now...
Lumian sighed quietly, watching Celeste and the enforcers disappear at the stairwell.
He had been worried that Celeste's issues might trigger Julie to lose control before they were fully prepared.
That would interfere with his studying!
Reading for a while longer, Lumian noticed Morora's Archbishop Heraberg patrolling the brass bookshelves.
Thinking for a few seconds, he spoke as Heraberg neared, "Your Grace, I have a question."
Dressed in a plain white robe with brass threads, Heraberg smiled kindly.
"Ask away."
Holding his book, Lumian sincerely asked, "The mausoleum's taboos seem to target the living. What if an undead or an immortal creature enters?"
Heraberg gave Lumian a deep look and smiled. "The dead should remain in eternal slumber. What do you think?"
Meaning, an undead would fall into eternal sleep upon entering the mausoleum? As expected, 0-01 has death and darkness characteristics...
So, I can't exploit any loophole with the Eggers family's golden mask...
Lumian sighed regretfully. "I think so too."
Heraberg, with his white hair and beard, spoke like a teacher. "While studying, remember to take care of your health and stay mentally sharp. Don't stay up late reading. Maintain your usual pace."
Wh- Is he worried I'll degrade and succumb to the books' inherent corruption? Need to control the corruption rate? Lumian pondered, then stood up and responded, "Yes, Your Grace."
He immediately tucked the book into his Traveler's Bag and left the cathedral under Heraberg's approving gaze.
Crossing the square outside, Lumian saw Julie stepping lightly out the cathedral's side door, looking relaxed.
Here to check the situation first, huh... Lumian watched her disappear into another alley, heading back to the Carnivore bar.
Approaching the bar, he heard a pained, agonized scream not far

away.
Julie's doing? Lumian chuckled to himself. Feeling bad, cut a finger.
Feeling good, cut another. Can't she find another hobby?
Luckily, there were enough exiles in Morora.
Still, Lumian knew their presence had tripled the daily death toll since they arrived.
They couldn't stay long, or the exiles' replenishment wouldn't keep up, and Morora would face a shortage crisis.
The bar was closed. Lumian went behind the counter, poured himself a glass of liquor, and sipped it slowly, as if waiting for something.
After a while, Julie appeared at the door in a shirt and skirt, her cheeks still flushed. She glanced at Lumian and smiled. "Boss, were you waiting for me?"
She played with a frosty, bloody object in her hand.
Lumian took a sip of Lanti Proof and asked, "Do you know my name?"
Julie approached the counter, shook her head, and smiled. "I only know you're my boss."
"Celeste, as an enforcer, should know the names of every Morora resident," Lumian said directly.
Julie's expression changed slightly, then she sighed and smiled. "But she said Louis must be a fake name."
"I don't believe you didn't ask someone on the outside to investigate my real identity," Lumian said, leaning on the counter and sipping his drink.
Julie pouted, not answering directly, only saying, "It doesn't matter."
"True." Lumian nodded with a smile. "I caught a Mirror Person from Underground Trier who told me his companions went to Lenburg to find Morora. Now, new intel suggests they might be here."
Julie's smile faded, replaced by a serious look.
Lumian finished his Lanti Proof, set the glass down, and headed upstairs.
Julie sat in silence for a while, then left the Carnivore bar.
In an empty house in Morora.
The Demoness put on a gold ring set with blue gems and sat before a half-length mirror.
The reflection wavered slightly, showing some changes.

Chapter 824: Nightmare Changes

Julie watched her reflection in the mirror gradually become bloodstained, her expression turning cold and her eyes filling with malice.

She wasn't surprised. Instead, she smirked with a hint of sarcasm.

The reflection became agitated, clawing at the glass as if trying to scratch out an escape.

Her face twisted quickly, and the malice in her eyes seemed almost tangible.

Before long, another figure appeared behind her-a man with short brown hair, bearing a strong resemblance to Julie, also covered in blood and exuding a sinister aura.

Julie rubbed the blue gem-encrusted gold ring on her thumb, watching as the female and male versions of herself shrank and faded, revealing their current surroundings.

It was a dark, almost lightless world.

Beyond this world, countless points of light representing different mirrors dotted the surroundings. Most were affected by Morora's seal, appearing hazy and unreachable.

Julie's gaze swept across the few clearer points of light, her intuition as a Demoness guiding her to one particular mirror.

Inside that mirror, a shadowy figure appeared.

Sensing Julie's gaze, the figure recoiled and left the mirror.

Julie immediately reached into the mirror, pulling herself through it.

Ignoring the curses and anger from her two reflections, she directly transported to the mirror that had shown the shadow.

She emerged from a small mirror into a long-abandoned room, the traces of occupancy wiped clean.

Julie turned to the window beside the mirror, observing the outside environment.

She saw a graveyard bathed in crimson moonlight, a cathedral-like library, and the clearly visible entrance to the underground mausoleum.

After a brief silence, Julie muttered to herself, "The Mirror People have indeed infiltrated..."

...

Upstairs in the Carnivore Bar, Lumian reclined in his chair, feet propped up, engrossed in his book.

There was still time to study!

He had told Julie about the Mirror People to leverage the Demoness Sect's power to confirm and search for them. As a Hunter, he couldn't utilize the mirror world on his own, and the Mirror

Cufflink could only be used twice more.
Remembering Archbishop Heraberg's advice to not overextend himself, Lumian decided to end his studies early and get some extra sleep tonight. Just as he was about to close his book, someone knocked on his door.
It was Julie.
She nodded slightly at Lumian, saying, "I found a Mirror Person spying on the mausoleum but couldn't catch them."
"Only one?" Lumian asked for confirmation.
Julie tersely acknowledged his words. "Only one."
She turned and headed to her room.
Lumian chuckled and said, "Not only did you not catch them, but you didn't even see what they looked like?"
His voice was low, almost to himself, but loud enough for Julie to hear.
Julie turned around and sneered. "At least I found traces of the Mirror People. Better than someone who needs me to confirm it."
Lumian pretended to be stung, retorting, "I was just letting you fulfill your pitiful, insignificant purpose."
Julie ignored him and went into her room.
Lumian smirked to himself and closed the wooden door.
Now, Julie should be less wary about him being capable of using the mirror world, right?
...
In a daze, Lumian saw a blood-stained land, collapsed grand structures, and towering iron-black pillars, many of which were broken.
Driven by instinct, he walked forward, passing through burning palaces, torrential rain, and a forest of lightning striking the ground.
He stopped before a corpse.
The body was charred black, the face flayed to reveal a scorched skull.
Behind it lay a mountain of bodies and bones, piled hundreds of meters high.
Lumian's gaze followed the corpses upward, sometimes meeting their eye sockets, which burned with pale or dark red flames.
Finally, he was about to see the top of the "mountain."
Suddenly, intense fear and a compulsion to stop thinking and follow orders overwhelmed him.
He jerked awake, gasping for breath.
Another nightmare...
The nightmares are becoming clearer and more frequent...
Lumian glanced towards the ground, instinctively reaching out as

if to touch something.
He grasped only air.
Quickly calming himself, he murmured, At this rate, when I finish reading the remaining books, these nightmares caused by the corruption might transform drastically...
What will that bring?
If the nightmares get clearer and the feeling stronger, I might lose control in my sleep. Then Albus, Julie, and Wanak would have the chance to challenge an Angel. No, the Church of Knowledge would eliminate the problem first. Having sealed Ludwig, they wouldn't hesitate to seal another...
Lumian rubbed his temples, agreeing more with Archbishop Heraberg's advice:
Don't rush; maintain physical health and mental clarity!
Even if corrupted, proceed gradually!
Sighing, Lumian believed that in five or six days, when he finished the borrowed books, the situation would change significantly in his favor.
But can the situation remain stable until I finish studying?
Since the last injury, Albus hasn't appeared for days, secretly plotting...
Wanak regained control of Dades Agricultural Company but no longer has fixed offices or residences...
Celeste's duty in the mausoleum is both a risk and an opportunity. She might have advanced the Demoness Sect's plans, and Julie's opportunity could be coming soon...
Will they let me study until I finish the books?
Probably not...
Lumian mused that Albus, Wanak, or the Demoness Sect would likely make a big move involving the mausoleum soon.
They might not know the importance of studying or that Lumian was diligently studying, but they must sense that delaying further would worsen their situation!
Never underestimate the intuition of Demonesses or the instincts of those backing Albus and Wanak!
...
Trier, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai.
Franca was smug about successfully planning and executing an ambush on a powerful Mirror Person.
This felt more rewarding than leading a team raid in her pre-transmigration games.
She pointed to the cash and scrolls on the coffee table, saying, "Let's split the spoils. You two go first."

Using Magic Mirror divination, the two Demonesses had identified the effects and incantations for the scrolls.
There was a Sun scroll, a Healing scroll, and one each of Lightning, Burning, Flash, Wind, Freezing, Paralysis, and Secret Voice.
Anthony gestured for Jenna to pick first.
Jenna, not wasting time with politeness, took the Sun, Lightning, and Flash scrolls after a few seconds of thought.
Anthony chose Healing, Paralysis, and Freezing, leaving 460 verl d'or and the remaining three scrolls for Franca.
Franca picked up the Secret Voice scroll, smiling. "This is perfect for coordinating operations. Surprised you didn't want it."
The Secret Voice scroll created a secret channel linking three to five people within fifty meters, allowing them to communicate without being overheard or blocked by obstacles.
You could leave it for Lumian... Jenna thought but didn't say, not wanting to dampen Franca's spirits.
As they chatted, a messenger from Madam Judgment delivered a reply:
"The Moses Ascetic Order will handle the abnormality in Kmerolo. You don't need to follow up."
...
In Trier, in a room with overturned furniture and papers scattered everywhere.
The Hermit, a Major Arcana card from the Tarot Club whom Franca and her team had met before, stood before a wall covered in meaningless lines. She wore black-framed glasses and a deep black robe adorned with eye-shaped purple patterns, examining faint traces of dried blackened blood, tears, and saliva.
A nearly transparent, eyelash-less, and indifferent eye hovered before her, silently observing. Its gaze seemed to contain countless stars and various scenes.
After a while, The Hermit ignored the blackened blood, taking a small amount of the powder stained with tears and saliva.
A dreamlike pumpkin carriage appeared before her, altering her appearance, aura, and physique.
The Hermit calmly sat in the carriage.
A group of mice pulled the pumpkin carriage into a tunnel outside the Trier catacombs.
Still seated in the pumpkin carriage, The Hermit conjured a vibrant, slightly unreal ball of yarn.
She infused the powder from before into the yarn and threw it into the tunnel's depths, leaving a bright thread on the ground, pointing the way forward.

Chapter 825: The Final Seduction

The Hermit followed the vibrant thread of yarn through the dark tunnel in her pumpkin carriage.
She didn't know how long she had been descending when she arrived at a naturally formed cave.
The vibrant yarn ball had stopped here.
The swarm of mice and the pumpkin carriage vanished, and The Hermit floated down, her feet touching the ground.
She didn't need to remove her glasses to see the pools of pus-like blood on the ground, eroding the soil in the extreme darkness.
For a moment, The Hermit seemed to see a scene from the past: A blurry figure staggered towards the cave, each step leaving a splatter of pus-like blood that sizzled as it corroded the rocks and soil.
The Hermit weaved through the pools of blood and entered the cave, but it was empty. The trail of pus-like blood ended abruptly.
It was as if the figure had exhausted all its flesh and blood, leaving no trace, or had evaporated entirely.
He had vanished.
Has Kmerolo disappeared like this... The Hermit immediately conjured nine blazing suns.
The intense heat caused the pools of blood to show signs of evaporation.
Then, the Major Arcana cardholder removed her glasses.
The pus-like blood changed immediately.
It wasn't blood but dense, intertwined, complex symbols or letters.
These symbols or letters were grouped together, eroding various rocks and soil, bright red and dazzling.
Even with her knowledge of mysticism, The Hermit couldn't identify what they represented.
Kmerolo's flesh and blood transformed into this? The Hermit pondered for a moment and decided to strip away all the bloody symbols and letters and take them to a high-ranking Cryptologist.
...
Morora, Carnivore bar, second floor.
Lumian had another nightmare, but this time, he was clearly aware that he was dreaming.
He dreamed of walking through a dark, lightless tunnel, with stone slabs beneath his feet and bricks in the walls, with rusty iron wall lamps every so often, none of them lit.
Lumian wandered aimlessly, sometimes turning right, sometimes descending stairs, and sometimes resting against the wall.
Suddenly, he saw yellowish light ahead.

In the glow, figures in black robes appeared, carrying quietly burning lanterns, their eyes covered with thick black cloth.
Law enforcement... Experimental subjects... Lumian instantly understood.
Am I dreaming of the mausoleum?
This matches the sealing information of 0-01 and the books' descriptions...
Using my knowledge and the corruption I've suffered, did I recreate a tunnel of the mausoleum in my dream?
The experimental subjects, despite being blindfolded, walked steadily, maintaining a straight line forward.
I don't seem to be blindfolded... *Will something abnormal happen?*
No, I'm just dreaming... Although lucid dreaming, Lumian's thoughts were sluggish, seemingly influenced by the dream.
As he was about to pass by the experimental subjects with lanterns, his gaze naturally fell on one of the lanterns.
The lantern's glass case, framed in bronze, reflected a black shadow.
The shadow, human-like in shape, flickered and leaped to another lantern.
That shadow isn't mine... nor the lantern-bearer's... It's... it's one of those Mirror People corrupted by the mausoleum's power? Or perhaps the Mirror Person that infiltrated Morora? Lumian shivered, feeling more awake than ever.
He focused his gaze and saw the slightly distorted, human-like black shadow pause and look back at him from the lantern's glass, illuminated by firelight.
As their eyes met, the shadow vanished instantly.
Lumian's vision wavered, the entire tunnel, lit by the lanterns, shaking violently.
Within seconds, Lumian woke up, his eyes snapping open.
The shaking continued, and his bed creaked while the house clattered.
An earthquake? Lumian judged calmly.
In Morora, he had already experienced four earthquakes, one volcanic eruption, five torrential rains, four hurricanes, three tornadoes, two hailstorms, and two snowstorms... Often, more than one extreme weather event occurred in a single day, though sometimes it was just ordinary weather fluctuations.
Based on his physical assessment and experience, Lumian judged that this earthquake wouldn't collapse the sturdy Carnivore bar building, so he lay there calmly, with no intention of getting out of bed and escaping to the street.
If worse came to worst, he could still teleport to the Knowledge

Cathedral.
Staring at the still-swaying ceiling, Lumian recalled the nightmare: Was I woken up by the earthquake, or did my nightmare trigger the earthquake?
After pondering for a while, Lumian believed it was the latter.
But this meant his nightmare had truly connected to the underground mausoleum!
Earlier, was I wandering through the mausoleum in some peculiar form, not needing to be blindfolded or carry a lantern?
Was everything I saw and experienced real, actually happening in real time?
Was the Mirror Person on the lantern real too?
Right, that didn't look like the lantern-bearer's Mirror Person, their physical condition was noticeably different.
Could it be the Mirror Person from Trier? Did he use the special power of the mirror world to start exploring the mausoleum before Albus, Julie, and I?
If so, he may have been at it for many days, and might be close to succeeding...
When he saw me, did he see what I look like, my state, my form?
Yes, if one enters the mausoleum without being blindfolded, the experimental subjects will see the corresponding Mirror Person in their own eyes and be replaced?
A series of questions flashed through Lumian's mind, creating a sense of urgency.
He sat up and looked towards the window.
The earthquake had already subsided, and outside the not-so-thick curtains, the sky seemed to be getting slightly brighter.
Lumian sighed, suppressing his negative emotions, and decided to sleep a bit more, until six in the morning.
He needed to be in his best condition to complete the remaining three days of study, otherwise, he might lose control or even die from it.
After waking up naturally, Lumian had breakfast prepared by Lez and then went directly to the Knowledge Cathedral, sitting in his usual spot, reading and monitoring the entrance to the underground mausoleum.
This way, if there was an anomaly, he could teleport there immediately and enter the underground.
After alternating between thunderstorms and clear skies, Lumian finished his morning studies and headed back to the Carnivore bar for lunch.
About a third of the way back, he heard a painful yet slightly pleasurable scream from the direction of the bar.

Is Julie at it again? She wasn't in a bad or good mood today...
And it's the bar's busy time... Did someone bother her? Lumian shook his head, thinking Julie was quite unprofessional.
Soon, he returned to the Carnivore bar and found the area in front of the bar and inside the hall empty, with tables and chairs overturned, broken glasses scattered, and spilled liquor on the floor, some of it already frozen.
It looks like Julie went berserk, attacked all the patrons, and drove them away... *What happened?* Lumian became highly alert.
As the owner of the Carnivore bar, he felt both distressed over the wasted liquor and keenly aware of the unusual situation.
He remembered that Julie had seemed fine when he left in the morning, even proactively helping Lez prepare the ingredients for the day.
Lumian sniffed the air, detecting a faint smell of blood and a hint of something resembling chestnut flowers.
To most men, the latter scent was very familiar.
Something's off. Based on my observations, Julie usually finishes her collection before the target reaches the peak of pleasure. This time, the scent is quite noticeable... Did she let the original owner of the collection enjoy themselves? Lumian frowned and followed the smell of blood upstairs, pushing open Julie's door.
On Julie's bed lay Lez, naked, eyes wide open, mouth half-puffed, with his legs a bloody mess.
He was dead.
Julie attacked Lez? Lumian looked into Lez's eyes, seeing extreme pleasure, relaxation, and evident pain, with no signs of a supernatural battle in the room, only splattered blood and a few sources of the chestnut flower scent telling the story.
This made Lumian suspect that Lez had willingly gone to bed with Julie.
And this culinary artist knew well what Julie would do.
Similarly, Julie's behavior was different this time, seemingly allowing Lez to complete his climax.
Did Lez seek liberation? Or did he make a preemptive move and fail?
Lumian wasn't shocked by this but found it too sudden.
Lumian's gaze fell on the lifeless bloodstain at Lez's mouth.
After a few seconds, he suddenly recalled something Julie had once said to Lez: "I've decided to seduce you last."
Last... Lumian's eyes narrowed sharply.
To Julie, now was the final moment?
Was she about to take her last action?
Where had she gone now?

Chapter 826: Entry

Lumian directly activated the black mark on his right shoulder and teleported to the edge of the boundless cemetery, right at the entrance to the underground mausoleum.

This place looked like the mouth of a giant beast, with gray-white stone steps stretching down into the dark, deep throat.

Lumian suspected Julie had already entered the mausoleum.

Whatever the Demoness Sect's plan was, it ultimately had to involve the sealed 0-01 deep within the mausoleum!

Lumian sniffed around the entrance, detecting only the scents of grass, trees, and the earthy smell after rain. There was no trace of Julie's fragrance.

At the same time, he scrutinized the gray-white stone steps descending into the darkness, looking for fresh footprints-there had been a thunderstorm earlier.

No signs of Julie... Lumian turned and transformed into a blazing white spear, shooting across hundreds of meters and landing beside the Knowledge Cathedral.

He didn't take a detour, opening the nearest stained glass window and jumping into the church, quickly running to Heraberg, who was dressed in a plain white robe with brass thread.

"Your Grace, do you know which room Celeste is staying in?" Lumian's breath was steady, but he spoke quickly.

Heraberg, the archbishop of Morora, smiled and replied, "The third floor, the room closest to the cemetery, with a view of the mausoleum entrance."

Lumian was taken aback.

You knew all along...

He didn't waste time asking further, igniting white flames on his body and darting like a javelin towards the staircase.

After a few turns, Lumian reached Celeste's room.

He grasped the brass handle, gently twisted it, and pushed open the wooden door.

The room was tidy, with minimal furnishings-a single bed, a desk, a chair, and a shelf for books and miscellaneous items, giving off a monastic austerity.

Indeed, Celeste is gone as well... Lumian confirmed his suspicion.

He didn't immediately enter the room, sensing it was filled with invisible, pathogen-laden webs, like a poisonous spider's nest.

While preparing to burn the unseen webs, he observed further.

He noticed Celeste might have been playing the part of a corrupted experiment subject, as the room lacked any unnecessary items. With her disappearance, even the spare black robes were gone,

leaving the room empty, save for a mirror on the desk by the window.
The mirror was a common dressing mirror, not unusual in a Demoness's room.
But it sparked a thought in Lumian: Did Celeste leave through the mirror world?
The law enforcers usually entered and exited together. She couldn't have bet on the Knowledge Cathedral turning a blind eye and walked out alone...
Is she meeting Julie somewhere in the mirror world?
Did Julie and Celeste use the mirror world to enter the mausoleum, leaving no traces at the entrance?
With this in mind, Lumian's thoughts raced, forming a web of connections from various bits of information and ideas.
He quickly made a guess: Did Celeste patrol the mausoleum as an experiment subject several times to place mirrors at key points or obtain coordinates of similar reflective items?
When I used the Mirror Cufflink before, I couldn't identify which mirrors were in the mausoleum or if they were dangerous...
This was the Demoness Sect's preparation, and now, Celeste has control over the mirrors in the mausoleum and can start the operation?
Why not act immediately after her last patrol?
Were a few days needed for other preparations?
As his thoughts raced, Lumian whispered, "Termiboros, do you think I should enter the mausoleum now or continue my studies, hoping Julie and Celeste fail?"
Before Termiboros could respond, Lumian laughed and said, "I won't rely on others to fail."
He had made his decision.
He would enter the mausoleum to disrupt and stop the Demoness Sect's actions, buying a few more days!
The only issue was that in the mausoleum, he had to be blindfolded and couldn't read or study during the downtime.
Is there a way to convert text to sound? Aurore's grimoires mentioned related ideas and preliminary results, but I'm not a Warlock... Lumian sighed internally, then heard Termiboros's layered, majestic voice: "It's very dangerous."
You're actually answering... *Is this a genuine warning or a hidden plot?*
He only mentioned the danger, without strongly dissuading me... No matter, whether Termiboros opposes or tempts me, I'm going...
Lumian quickly calmed himself, chuckled, and said, "Maybe we'll both become 0-01's puppets."

"Not including me," Termiboros responded in a powerful voice.
Is that so? Lumian once again transformed into a flaming spear and swiftly returned to the cathedral hall.
He approached Heraberg, holding three books, and smiled. "Your Grace, I still have two and a half books left to read. Do you have a way to convert the remaining knowledge into sound so I can study while exploring the mausoleum?"
Heraberg's wrinkles smoothed out, and his expression became even gentler. "Good, good, this is the attitude needed for study."
He took out a brass sheet and accepted the books from Lumian.
In Heraberg's amber eyes, countless symbols and words swirled and spun.
Lumian saw tiny glimmers rising from the books, converging into a river that flowed into the brass sheet.
What kind of mystic art is this... Lumian was mesmerized.
Before coming to Lenburg, he had gathered detailed information about the Church of Knowledge, including some details about the Reader pathway.
He knew the Sequence 5 of the Reader pathway was called Mysticism Magister, capable of inventing and creating unique spells.
Soon, the glimmers vanished, and the brass sheet became more lustrous, with its symbols and patterns gaining more depth.
With two snaps, Heraberg broke off two corners from the brass sheet and molded them into cylindrical shapes.
Lumian watched, jaw dropping.
Without the aid of fire, breaking off two pieces of brass with just my hands is quite difficult, let alone molding them like clay with my fingers...
Your Grace, are all Readers this strong, or is it unique to you as a puppet?
Your fingers could probably crush my bones to dust...
Or is this a side effect of the mystic art?
"Insert them into your ears. The activation spell is 'listen' in ancient Hermes, as I know you only speak this language and haven't mastered Jotun or Elvish yet. The deactivation spell is 'stop.'" Heraberg handed the brass sheet and the two cylindrical brass earplugs to Lumian.
Lumian instinctively argued, "I know Hermes too."
He understood Heraberg was referring to languages capable of invoking supernatural powers.
"Hermes?" Heraberg laughed.
Lumian sensed contempt for the Hermes language in his laughter and expression.

With time running out, Lumian didn't ask further, inserting one brass earplug and pocketing the rest. He then transformed into a blazing white spear and flew from the open stained glass window to the mausoleum entrance.
Lumian calmed his breathing, took a carbide lamp and white bandages from the Traveler's Bag.
After lighting the carbide lamp, he wrapped the bandages around his head, covering his eyes.
Lumian's vision gradually turned pitch black.
For a Hunter who relied heavily on sight, this was far from a pleasant experience.
Feeling his way, he picked up the carbide lamp and cautiously descended the gray-white stone steps.
He focused on maintaining his balance, worried about stepping wrong and tumbling down like a wheel into the mausoleum.
He wasn't afraid of getting hurt but feared extinguishing the lamp.
Being blind is no fun... Lumian muttered, constructing a mental map.
Most of the map's content came from the 0-01 sealing information and the book Examples of Mausoleum Construction, with some from his nightmares over the past few days.
Using the mental map, his heightened senses, and his control over his body, Lumian gradually adapted to the darkness, descending more steadily.
Finally, he reached the bottom of the stairs and officially entered the mausoleum.
He felt the surrounding darkness surge like a tide, eroding his skin, bringing a chill and a slow drain of life force.
Almost simultaneously, his right palm turned icy cold.
The abnormal life force drain stopped.
The Underworld Daoist's mark activated? Lumian silently mused, In this situation, even without a lit carbide lamp, I shouldn't encounter any issues in the mausoleum's darkness. Hehe, when I find Julie and Celeste, I could use my Hunter ability to extinguish their lamps directly. But Julie is special, and Celeste likely is too. It might not be easy to have the darkness engulf them...
Blindfolded, Lumian turned and sensed the Abscessed Hand's head location using the semi-activated black mark on his right shoulder.
He planned to find this thing first, then stop Julie and Celeste.
Then, he could toss the separated Abscessed Hand parts together and see what mutation occurs, giving the enemies a "surprise."
Perhaps because they were in the same mausoleum, Lumian quickly sensed the summoning and special connection from Hand

Bro.
It was not far!

Chapter 827: Blind Battle

Morora, fifth floor of the Knowledge Cathedral.

A law enforcer in a black robe stood at the window, looking at the entrance to the underground mausoleum, which resembled the mouth of a giant beast.

In his eyes, Lumian's figure could be seen descending the gray-white stone steps one by one.

Elsewhere in Morora, Albus Medici stood by another window.

However, his gaze was not on the nearby buildings but on the cemetery and Lumian, neither of which could be seen from this street.

Is it starting? the descendant of the Red Angel chuckled.

...

Blindfolded, Lumian moved steadily through the darkness, guided by the mental map in his mind, approaching the location of the Abscessed Hand's head.

This is the end. I need to turn left... It's exactly like the diagram in the book... Lumian reached out his right hand, not holding the carbide lamp, and touched something cold and hard.

It was likely a wall.

He then turned left, walked a bit further, and stopped.

He sensed the Abscessed Hand's head was just a few meters to his right, while the surroundings were eerily silent.

Lumian turned, extending his right hand in that direction, but he only felt an equally cold, hard wall.

Behind the wall? According to the diagram, there should be a room behind here, and the door is about five meters ahead...

Even though he couldn't see, the importance of knowledge became evident in this situation.

Counting his steps, he reached what should be the door and felt around, finding the wooden board.

He fumbled for the handle, gently twisted it, and pushed open the slightly ajar door.

Meanwhile, he mused internally, Albus casually threw it, and the Hand Bro's head ended up here?

Even if it bounced around, it shouldn't have gotten this far...

Even though it's not very far from the entrance, there were two turns, and the door is even closed.

Did the door close afterward?

Growing more cautious, Lumian listened for any sounds beyond the door.

It was completely silent.

He slowly entered the room, moving towards the corner from

which the rotten stench emanated, his connection to the Abscessed Hand growing clearer.
His right hand was ready to draw the Sword of Courage from the Traveler's Bag at any moment, while his left, holding the carbide lamp, reached for Abscessed Hand's head.
The head was higher than he expected, placed on a shelf rather than the ground.
Suddenly, his fist brushed against something slimy and damp, which wriggled slightly.
Five cold, finger-like things instantly grabbed Lumian's left fist.
A chill ran down his spine.
Encountering such a thing while blindfolded was many times more terrifying.
He couldn't tell what it was!
But he was certain it wasn't the Abscessed Hand's head, as that was just a head!
In a flash, Lumian's left fist ignited with blazing white flames.
His fist moved forward, accelerating suddenly, snapping sharply between the finger-like things.
Boom!
The explosion scattered the slimy fingers, and Lumian used the semi-activated black mark on his right shoulder to teleport behind what he presumed was the Abscessed Hand's head.
"Hmph!"
Lumian exhaled two beams of white light from his nostrils.
He felt he had hit his target.
Without waiting for his opponent to fall, he swung his left fist, burning with intense flames, while his right hand stayed ready to draw the Sword of Courage.
Bang!
It felt like hitting an elastic, dead wood. He unleashed his accumulated flaming forces.
Boom!
The violent blast pushed the slimy "wood" forward a bit.
Then, there was silence, with no sound of something hitting the ground.
Cautiously, Lumian transformed into a blazing-white spear and charged.
He felt himself piercing through a withered tree filled with rust and flesh, landing in front of the Abscessed Hand's head amidst a strong, pungent odor.
There was no resistance, no real counterattack.
Is it over? Lumian, still blindfolded, felt uneasy.
He kept his right hand in the Traveler's Bag, holding the carbide

lamp's handle with his mouth, reaching up with his left hand, prepared to use the Spirit World Traversal if needed.
In the still atmosphere, Lumian touched the slimy, foul-smelling, limp flesh and greasy, disgusting "weeds."
This should be Hand Bro's hair... No other abnormalities...
Lumian mustered his courage and continued feeling around.
Soon, he touched a decaying neck, then a wounded "shoulder."
A shoulder... Despite being mentally prepared, Lumian was still startled.
The Abscessed Hand's head couldn't have grown a body, right?
After waiting a few seconds with no sudden attack, Lumian grabbed the greasy "weeds" that were likely the hair and pulled.
As he applied force, there was a reluctant, cork-popping "plop" sound.
His center of gravity wavered as if he had pulled something free.
He had torn off the head!
Almost simultaneously, Lumian sensed the Abscessed Hand's body parts inside the Traveler's Bag moving, but they couldn't breach the spatial barrier, only wriggling closer, pushing away other items.
This is Hand Bro's head... Then who tried to 'shake hands' with me? Scenes flashed through Lumian's mind: A head dragging a bloody spine flying through the air, a headless body chasing it...
In the mausoleum sealing 0-01, there must be similar headless bodies, and one of them took Hand Bro's head, attaching it to its neck? No wonder Albus's casual toss brought Hand Bro's head all the way here... Lumian quickly guessed, finding the situation both amusing and horrifying.
If the headless body and the Abscessed Hand's head stayed together for months, something terrifying might happen...
Lumian didn't dare put the head in the Traveler's Bag, which would inevitably cause the body parts to reunite, summoning the Abscessed Hand. He wanted to wait until he encountered Julie, Celeste, Albus, or Wanak.
Holding the head and the lamp, Lumian prepared to leave the room.
Suddenly, Lumian felt something and flinched his right shoulder.
He sensed that something was trying to pat him.
But when he moved away, everything returned to normal, silent and still.
Lumian's body ignited with blazing-white flames that expanded outward in a spherical shape, pushing in all directions.
The flames only ignited the object that had originally held the Abscessed Hand's head.
Unable to see, Lumian didn't dwell on what had tried to pat his

shoulder. Recalling the earlier battle, he quickly determined his position and direction.
Then, he walked steadily back to the door and exited, acting as if he could see every detail around him.
Finally obtaining the Abscessed Hand's head gave Lumian a bit of confidence. Using the mental map he had formed, he made his way to the lowest level of the underground mausoleum, filled with puppet soldiers.
Blindfolded with layers of white bandages, he occasionally turned right, walked forward, descended stairs, and fumbled to open heavy or simple doors.
He didn't forget to activate the brass amulet in ancient Hermes, listening with one ear and monitoring his surroundings with the other.
As he walked, Lumian suddenly conjured a flame in his right palm and flung it ahead, forming a burning straight sword.
It seemed to hit something, but it could have just been an illusion.
Lumian didn't maintain the flaming sword, letting it extinguish.
He didn't investigate whether he had encountered something real or if it was just a reaction from his tense, sightless state.
Though his knowledge didn't explicitly cover it, his past experiences hinted at a key point: In the underground mausoleum, if you believe something is real, it likely becomes real! As long as it doesn't pose a direct threat, it's best to ignore potential dangers!
After descending another staircase, Lumian suddenly felt like he was being watched by numerous eyes.
At that moment, he had the urge to tear off his bandages and see what was happening.
Plop! A cold drop of liquid fell on the back of his left hand.
It felt sticky, but there was no smell of blood.
Plop, plop, plop! The cold "droplets" increased, falling faster and faster, like a sudden downpour.
Inside the mausoleum, 20 to 30 meters underground, it started to "rain."
What the hell is going on? What's around me... The book only mentioned a hall here, straight ahead to the exit, but it didn't provide a detailed layout or mention anything special inside...
Lumian endured the soaking "rain" and, under countless watching eyes, stepped forward with his right foot.
Thud!
A drumbeat suddenly sounded, as if striking Lumian's heart, making him feel like he wanted to spit out blood.
Thud! Thud! Thud!
The drumming grew clearer and more intense.

Lumian also faintly heard a soft, scratching chuckle.

Chapter 828: Same Kind?

Drumming echoed continuously, each beat resonating with Lumian's heartbeat, making him feel like he was about to vomit blood.

Enduring the discomfort, Lumian pushed through the cold liquid like a sudden downpour, under countless watching eyes and strange, soft chuckles, steadfastly moving forward.

One step, two steps, three steps, suddenly a blood-red color lit up his bandage-wrapped vision.

It was a reddish plain, with an army of undead in iron-black armor advancing.

My first nightmare after I started studying? The thought flashed through Lumian's mind. He then noticed the scene before him fracturing, overlaid with images of burning palaces, forests of thunder, mountains of corpses, and rows of blindfolded experimental subjects marching.

These were all from his recent nightmares.

Lumian realized it wasn't the bandages losing their effect but a powerful hallucination induced by something, blending reality and illusion.

Meanwhile, the monotone voice in his left ear stopped reciting knowledge from books and became sharp and raspy, shouting something unintelligible.

Lumian's right palm suddenly felt hot, with a slight burning sensation.

The residual aura of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor had been triggered!

Simultaneously, the mark from the Underworld Daoist grew colder, suppressing the emerging violence and madness, while a slight burning sensation appeared on Lumian's left chest.

Is this a mishmash of everything? Lumian mentally mocked himself.

With these changes, the cold liquid droplets softened, like cold, wet hands brushing against his body.

The war drumbeats no longer synchronized with his heartbeat, the mysterious gazes lost their unnerving power, and the scratching chuckles turned into soft, alluring singing.

Lumian paused, guessing at what was happening.

He maintained a steady pace, heading deeper into the hall marked on his mental map.

The "raindrops," drumming, gazes, and singing remained unchanged, allowing him to proceed smoothly.

This must be the corruption from the 0-01 sealing information and

knowledge I've learned, triggering hallucinations and making the dangers here see me as one of their own, similarly corrupted?
This also triggered the Blood Emperor's residual aura, causing a chain reaction with the Underworld Daoist's mark and Mr. Fool's seal. Without these, I might have truly become a puppet like the others here, a real experimental subject...
Hmm, did Mr. Fool's seal also passively confuse perceptions?
Deciding based on similar levels of corruption could be a mysticism principle or an exploit...
As his thoughts cleared, Lumian raised his right hand, pressing it to his left chest, silently muttering and joking with himself, Praise Mr. Fool!
Thanks to Archbishop Heraberg, thanks to the power of knowledge! Learning brings me joy!
While listening to the strange roars in his earplugs, Lumian tried to discern any hidden information, maintaining his quick pace to avoid provoking unseen dangers.
Estimating his steps and distance, comparing it with his mental map, Lumian finally reached what should be the hall's exit.
At that moment, the nightmare scenes in his vision changed.
He seemed to be at a high place, looking down at a mountain of corpses and bones.
His gaze moved down, past the burning pale flames and dark-red lights in the eye sockets of the skeletons, past the rotting flesh and pale bones, to the dark red near-black ground, and the iron-black armor.
The metallic surface of the armor reflected a single black figure.
Lumian saw it clearly: It was the bespectacled, scholarly-looking serial killer Guei!
This exile, sent to Morora with Lumian, Julie, and Lez, had vanished after spending some time in the Knowledge Cathedral.
The reflections of Guei on the armor seemed to sense Lumian's gaze, suddenly looking up, but quickly lowering his head again, as if realizing it was a mistake.
The fragmented scenes vanished.
Guei?
His reflection on the iron-black armot... like mirrors...
Is he the Mirror Person who infiltrated Morora?
Lumian's eyes widened behind the white bandages.
He quickly compared Guei's figure with the Mirror Person from his nightmares: Highly likely the same!
So it's him... and he even knows to study in the Knowledge Cathedral... He's now around that mountain of corpses? Lumian suddenly felt that Guei might be as troublesome and dangerous as

Albus Medici, Julie, Celeste, or Wanak.
Recalling the recent scene, Lumian thought his perspective was odd:
At the top of the mountain of corpses?
Overlooking everything...
Did I share the perspective of 0-01?
Right, being heavily corrupted means becoming its puppet, and it seems high-level Hunters can share power, damage, vision, hearing, and feelings with their team...
0-01 just considered me one of its own?
It didn't give me power like Wanak, probably not fully 'accepted'...
If I read all the remaining books and mastered the knowledge, would the corruption reach a critical point, making 0-01 see me as a fully submissive puppet, while I'm not? In such a case, I could approach it and find a way to leave a mark.
This matches my earlier guess. The purpose of the test is to gauge the level of corruption, my body's endurance, and the balance of the various corruptions within me.
I really needed to ace it. If I hid anything and colored Archbishop Heraberg's judgment, I'd have been the one suffering. I would either become a true puppet of 0-01 or die here due to insufficient corruption.
Knowledge is indeed power; knowledge indeed holds wealth!
Lumian couldn't help but curse Julie and Celeste. Those two Demonesses raised by pigs had prevented him from completing his studies!
Since it had already happened, he could only keep cursing while passing through the hall's exit.
After walking a few dozen meters along the marked passage, Lumian suddenly felt a disturbance to the side, hearing the sound of something heavy moving through the air.
Holding his carbide lamp and the head of the Abscessed Hand, he lunged forward and rolled away.
Thud!
The sound of something heavy hitting the ground echoed.
Using the sound, Lumian quickly sketched an image of the "enemy" in his mind: a giant sword!
In the underground mausoleum, the only beings carrying giant swords without feeling alive that Lumian could think of were the puppet soldiers.
Am I being attacked by a puppet soldier in this passage?
Hey, we're on the same side! We're both 0-01's soldiers!
Surprised, Lumian heard a whooshing sound as the giant sword swung down again.

Completely blind, Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder, teleporting behind the suspected puppet soldier attacker.
Simultaneously, knowledge from the Doll Crafting and Maintenance book flashed in his mind: "The puppet soldiers used in the underground tomb are uniformly two meters tall, made of iron...
"Their weapons come in four types: giant swords, hammers, spears, and bows...
"The weakest point of the puppet soldiers is their neck, due to mechanical structure issues and the inevitable development brought by the mausoleum's corrupting forces..."
As this knowledge flashed by, Lumian leaped, tensed his chest muscles, spread his arms, raised his right fist, and aimed at the back of the puppet soldier's neck, as constructed in his mind.
His fist ignited with layers of compressed white-hot flames, finally striking something hard and cold.
With a clang, the compressed flames were injected into the puppet soldier's neck.
Using the force, Lumian flipped back in midair, while an explosive sound echoed from within the puppet soldier.
A Cull completed with Fire Infusion!
The sound of heavy metal fragments hitting the ground followed.
As Lumian steadied himself, he heard Albus's voice in his ear:
"You can see?"
This member of the Medici family had a peculiar metallic quality in his voice.
Albus is here too? Did he witness me precisely dismantling the puppet soldier? Lumian's right hand stealthily reached into the Traveler's Bag, as he responded with a smile, "Can you see too?"
Albus's metallic voice came from another direction:
"I can't see by myself; I'm blindfolded like you. But I can share the vision of the puppet soldiers here."
This is an example of the power of high-level Hunters... A gift from the Red Angel? This gift can even piggyback on 0-01's puppets... According to Madam Magician, that King of Angels once held 0-01...
Lumian deliberately harrumphed and said, "Did you make the puppet soldier attack me?"
Albus switched locations again, seemingly using different puppet soldiers to speak.
"This was a test. Only those who pass the test are qualified to cooperate with me."
"You think you're worthy of cooperating with me? Why would you think I want to work with you?" Lumian said disdainfully.
Albus laughed. "That Demoness has a very dangerous item. If we

don't work together, she could take us out one by one."

Chapter 829: Deception and Betrayal

Cooperate? You just want to use me as cannon fodder, right?

Well, let's see if I can find out what item Julie has... With his eyes covered by white bandages, Lumian wore an expression of skepticism. "How dangerous could it be?"

Albus, also blindfolded and holding a lantern, leaned against the wall of a burial chamber, watching Lumian through the eyes of the iron puppet soldiers twenty meters away.

He chuckled inwardly. You didn't put that ragged head in your bag but carried it in your hand. Not afraid of trouble, or are you planning something?

And your right hand has been in that bag made by a high-level Apprentice...

The half-body should already be inside. You don't want to reunite the head and body now, fearing unforeseen consequences. You plan to use it as an indiscriminate weapon at a crucial moment, don't you?

Perfect for surprising Julie and the others. I won't try it myself to avoid unnecessary consumption.

Cooperation is great; it gathers the dangers together, letting them cancel each other out...

Albus made an iron puppet's mouth move, its metallic voice saying, "The item on that Demoness is one of five created by the Primordial Demoness before Her slumber after the Pale Disaster of the Fourth Epoch. It can make the bearer a vessel for the Primordial Demoness's descent."

"A vessel for a deity's descent..." Lumian repeated.

The Demoness Sect plays high-stake games, don't they?

He had thought Julie's item could only temporarily grant her the power of a Sequence 4 Demoness of Despair, not that she could briefly become the Primordial Demoness herself!

Even a fraction of a true god's power was immense!

Albus's laughter echoed in the metal cavity.

"Yes, a vessel.

"Fortunately, Julie isn't sturdy enough as a vessel. If she were an Angel-level Demoness, she could sustain the descent for a minute or two without dying. A Saint-level Demoness could hold it for a few seconds, but her soul and body would collapse. Julie, as a Demoness of Affliction, can't maintain the state for more than three seconds and that's with the cost of complete annihilation.

"Even without invoking the descent, the item grants her various special abilities, temporarily allowing her to use Sequence 4 powers.

"If we don't cooperate, facing Julie's normal state alone is tough but not hopeless. But if she's pushed to the brink and tries the descent, we won't last three seconds.
"By working together and using all our trump cards, we might last until her descent ends. Then, we rely on our skills."
Last three seconds in front of a Demoness... Such ambiguous words would be a field day for the scandal reporters on Trier's Avenue du Boulevard. They'd twist your words into questioning your prowess... Influenced by vulgar jokes from Trier's Ghost Face and other tabloids and Franca's quips, Lumian mentally criticized.
He didn't believe in Albus's sincere cooperation. He thought this Red Angel's descendant would throw him out as a shield at the critical moment to endure Julie's deity's descent. This might be Albus's ultimate plan to survive.
Like Emperor Roselle's parable: in a forest, you don't need to outrun a bear, just your companion.
Franca often joked that in adventures, companions were the best shields.
But Julie and Celeste likely know my true identity, that I'm a lover of one of their peers, and that I was once an Iron and Blood Cross Order member. They wouldn't place as much importance on me as much as they'd be wary of a Medici. So it's still a question who's the primary target and who's the shield... In a hesitant, distrustful tone, Lumian said, "I can sense Julie's danger but didn't expect it to be this severe.
"Of course, I still don't trust you."
"Cooperation and mutual vigilance are not contradictory. I can't truly trust you either," Albus replied with a hint of amusement.
"When there's a common interest, even enemies who killed one's parents can temporarily cooperate. How much more so for us?"
While speaking, Albus thought to himself, Working together against those two Demonesses is better than fighting you now and facing your hidden trump cards head-on. Even if I win, the cost would be high, and how would I deal with the Demonesses and Wanak afterward?
Heh heh, in a real fight with the Demonesses, you won't be able to hide your trump cards. The situation will become chaotic, everyone will go all out, and the dangers will cancel each other out. I'm best at winning in chaos...
After a moment of contemplation, Lumian gritted his teeth and said, "Let's cooperate until we deal with the two Demonesses."
"A very wise choice." Albus did not hide his joy.
Lumian, holding the carbide lamp and the Abscessed Hand's head, began to walk slowly.

With a posture of "I am trying to show sincerity," he said, "Besides the two Demonesses and Wanak, we have another enemy.
"That's the Mirror Person from the special mirror world from Fourth Epoch Trier. His name in Morora is Guei."
"Mirror Person..." The iron puppet ahead repeated the term, then laughed. "I'm not surprised. It's a problem left by that lunatic Alista Tudor."
"What do you mean?" Lumian took the opportunity to ask.
Albus, with a tone of clear reverence, said, "You should know my ancestor was a King of Angels. He told me that the special mirror world was likely created by Tudor."
"Red Angel? Wasn't He killed before Alista Tudor became the Blood Emperor? How did He know the origin of the special mirror world?" Lumian expressed his doubts.
"What do you mean 'killed'?" Albus sighed. "That's why I dislike working with Hunters. If it weren't for today's necessity, I wouldn't have sought you out. Hunters really have a way with words."
"I also dislike working with Hunters, like you," Lumian agreed.
Albus switched to another iron puppet: "My ancestor entered the Fourth Epoch Trier and confirmed its various problems. He said the special mirror world might not be a product of those problems but the cause of them."
The Red Angel meant that the special mirror world wasn't created by the fall of the Blood Emperor and the destruction of Fourth Epoch Trier, but existed before and led to the need for a new Trier to seal it after Fourth Epoch Trier's fall? Could the Red Angel be deliberately spreading false information for some consOriginal?
But this matches what I found in the Blue Avenger's treasure vault- the Blood Emperor might have been using the mirror world for His resurrection arrangements before His fall.
Similarly, the Tamara family's connection with the special mirror world was also before the War of the Four Emperors...
Lumian stopped, thought for a few seconds, and said, "'Alista Tudor left too many problems behind, didn't He?"
Though the Knight of Swords said that among the crazy ancient gods of the Second Epoch, the Undying Phoenix Ancestor Gregrace was the most troublesome, causing many issues, and was quite similar to the Fourth Epoch's Blood Emperor Alista Tudor, Lumian had only encountered problems related to the Underworld from the Phoenix Ancestor. In contrast, he encountered troubles from the Blood Emperor frequently. So, in his mind, the Blood Emperor was the most troublesome, much more so than the Phoenix Ancestor.
Albus seemed to share a similar sentiment. Using the iron puppet's

mouth, he said, "Because He is the symbol of calamity."
Wh- Lumian suddenly had a deeper understanding of the Hunter pathway.
Albus then asked, "As temporary collaborators, do you need me to share the puppet's vision with you? That way, you won't have to pretend to be blind."
Such a good thing? Lumian instantly became wary.
Thinking about how Wanak had to fully submit to 0-01 to share a bit of power, and considering that all the puppets here were 0-01's minions, Lumian pondered for a few seconds and said, "No need."
In a situation where he was not truly part of Albus's team, he worried that sharing vision might gradually turn him into a puppet.
"Sometimes, being too cautious isn't good," Albus Medici said without further persuasion, his tone containing a hint of undisguised regret.
For the next while, Lumian followed his mental map, winding through the underground tombs. Albus occasionally used the iron puppets scattered around the area to remind him he wasn't left behind.
After a while, Lumian slowed his steps, mumbling to himself, In the Examples of Mausoleum Construction, there's nothing marked ahead...
This is where Albus comes in, isn't it?
Without hesitation, Lumian walked past what seemed to be a gate and entered the blank area on his mental map.
The next second, he felt his skin prickling, as if approaching a fierce lightning bolt yet not touching it.
Lumian immediately recalled the forest of lightning from his previous nightmare.
His ears then caught Albus's voice through the iron puppet:
"Wanak is coming. Just a dozen meters ahead."
Wanak? Lumian's mind immediately pictured the most dangerous figure in Morora, with blood-red hair and iron-black eyes, and his spirit instantly tensed up.

Chapter 830: Destination

Lumian had always thought Wanak, who could draw power from 0-01, was more dangerous than Albus and Julie. This lightning-filled area was perfect for Wanak to unleash his potential.

No matter if Wanak could only change the weather slightly or if he was on par with Julie and Celeste, who could become vessels for a deity's descent, in this forest of lightning, he was as powerful as a true demigod.

Together, Albus and I would get beaten up by the thunderstorm...

Lumian's first instinct was to exit this area and find another path to 0-01.

That way, even if Wanak pursued him, outside his optimal environment, he wouldn't be invincible.

In a flash, Lumian remembered the nightmares he had.

After the forest of lightning, there were mountains of corpses and bones, with 0-01 possibly at the peak.

This meant this was the only way to the core sealing area-there was no way around it!

This fact was hinted at in "Examples of Mausoleum Construction," even if it wasn't clearly marked.

Or, I could pretend to retreat, draw Wanak out, and avoid fighting him in the lightning forest...

Wait a minute...

Lumian suddenly had a bold idea.

Since previous dangers saw him as one of their own, would Wanak, a puppet of 0-01, make the same judgment?

Wanak wasn't a fully intelligent human but more like a sentient puppet.

Such a target could likely be deceived!

When I first arrived in Morora, I had little corruption from 0-01, with a mix of other influences, so it made sense for Wanak to see me as an enemy. But now, after much learning, the corruption is approaching a critical point.

! should try.

If it fails, I'll use Shadow Animation to withstand the lightning attack and seize the chance to teleport out of the forest, avoiding a direct fight with Wanak...

Lumian made his decision and stepped forward.

As he walked, he recalled the nightmares he had since arriving in Morora, listening to the brass earplugs recounting knowledge to align himself with the corruption. At the same time, he thought aimlessly about various significant and insignificant questions to relax and prevent his body from being too tense.

This could prevent Wanak from noticing anything unusual!
Why did I end up in the forest of lightning?
According to the nightmare, there should be burning palaces and waterfall-like downpours ahead.
Are they on a different route?
...
Lumian endured the increasing prickling sensation, mentally calculating his distance.
Three or four more steps to meet Wanak...
As soon as this thought crossed Lumian's mind, he heard slow but steady breathing, masked by the rolling thunder, just a few meters away.
Lumian's back tensed involuntarily, and his right hand reached into the Traveler's Bag, ready to pull out the headless corpse of the Abscessed Hand.
After its previous writhing approach, they had fused together but were temporarily unable to break through the Traveler's Bag's seal and reunite with the head.
As he got closer to Wanak, Lumian, unable to see his expression, instinctively wanted to hold his breath.
He quickly adjusted, forcing himself to remain calm.
The next second, he felt a gaze fall upon him, making the skin on his face break out in barely noticeable bumps.
It was Wanak's gaze.
At this moment, Lumian wished he were a Hypnotist, but he could only keep telling himself, I am an experimental subject, I am an experimental subject...
He maintained the same pace as the black-robed experimental subjects, walking straight ahead.
Two steps... one step... Lumian tried to clear his mind.
He walked past the imagined figure of Wanak.
One step... two steps... three steps... Lumian didn't dare relax, feeling cold sweat on his back.
Outside the lightning forest, Albus Medici, through a guardian puppet's eyes, watched Lumian holding the carbide lamp and the ragged head, step by step, approaching Wanak, who had unbuttoned two buttons of his shirt.
He saw Wanak's gaze fall on Lumian, follow him for seven or eight seconds, then slowly shift away, watching Lumian pass the most dangerous person in Morora and head towards the end of the lightning forest.
Wh- Albus squinted his eyes, then laughed. So that's how he gets through dangerous areas, no wonder he's been reading and studying these past weeks... When we reach the destination, I'll

have to guard against him using this trick...
Lumian walked a bit further, feeling the prickling sensation fade as faint echoes of sound from the brass earplugs leaked out, indicating he had left the lightning forest and entered a narrow corridor.
After this corridor, I should reach the area around the mountain of corpses...
Should I wait for Albus to catch up, or go face Julie and the others alone?
Heh heh, I wonder how Albus will get past Wanak...
Lumian stopped and listened for sounds from the direction of the lightning forest.
Thud, thud, thud. He heard slow, steady footsteps.
"Why did you stop?" Wanak's sharp voice suddenly rang in his ears.
A chill ran up Lumian's spine to the back of his head, making him almost pull out the headless corpse of the Abscessed Hand.
He stiffly wanted to "explain," but after a moment's thought, he chose to remain silent and continued walking.
In the nearly frozen air, Lumian heard the thudding footsteps pass him and head towards the end of the corridor.
Phew... He quietly exhaled.
He didn't stop again but slowed his pace, moving like a snail.
Soon, he felt countless eyes on him.
Seeing Wanak rush towards 0-01, Albus Medici laughed at Lumian's pointless risk-taking as he leisurely passed through the lightning forest.
Using the guardian puppets in the corridor, Albus saw the walls made of square iron plates, with surfaces as smooth as mirrors.
At this moment, twisted, pale faces appeared in these "mirrors."
These faces belonged to the residents of Morora, silently staring at Lumian. Occasionally, someone would cautiously extend a hand from the metal surface, quietly reaching for Lumian's body.
Lumian merely swung a fireball in that direction, not making any aggressive moves.
Seeing the pale hand retract into the iron wall, Albus made a puppet speak: "I see Wanak didn't blindfold himself. Do you want to try it too?"
In the underground mausoleum, puppets of Wanak's level don't need to blindfold themselves, not fearing replacement by a Mirror Person.
Theoretically, I should be able to do the same, given I'm almost like him now... Albus must have noticed Wanak didn't attack me and is suspecting my condition... Lumian calmly responded to Albus, "! don't want to die yet."

He then asked, "Should we wait here for a while, let Wanak and the two Demonesses fight it out, and then take advantage?"
Wanak rushing to the mountain of corpses must be to stop Julie and Celeste from doing something to 0-01!
Albus replied through a puppet: "I haven't seen the two Demonesses ahead."
Julie and Celeste haven't arrived yet? Did you two Demonesses get lost?
You were the first to enter the underground mausoleum! Or have you arrived but are hiding, waiting for the right moment? Lumian's thoughts raced, and he resumed his normal pace.
As he walked, he smiled at Albus. "You must have noticed Wanak won't attack me. So, will you let me go ahead unimpeded, join me, or rush ahead of me?"
Lumian worried Albus might lag behind, letting him face any unexpected dangers around the mountain of corpses alone. So he pointed out his unusual condition, making Albus cautious.
The next dangers, of course, should be faced together. No one should think of hanging back to reap the benefits after the fact!
Albus's laugh came from Lumian's side.
"Since we've agreed to cooperate, we'll go in together."
"That colors you in a different light," Lumian responded insincerely.
After several more steps, Lumian suddenly stopped, feeling he was about to reach the mountain of corpses.
"Why did you stop?" Albus asked through a puppet at the entrance.
"Why did you stop?" Lumian retorted.
"You still don't trust me," Albus sighed.
Lumian chuckled in amusement and replied, "Aren't you the same?"
Suddenly, he sped up, as if trying to leave Albus behind and rush to the foot of the mountain of corpses.
Moments later, he heard a swooshing sound, the noise of a flaming spear piercing the air.
Lumian scoffed and left the corridor completely.
The next second, he felt an intense sense of danger.
This wasn't a premonition but a Hunter's instinct to dodge an attack aimed at his head.
"Are you here to die too?" Julie's cold, indifferent voice echoed in Lumian's ears.
Lumian quickly activated the black mark on his right shoulder and withdrew his hand from the Traveler's Bag.
He pulled out a bluish-black, swollen, headless corpse!
...

Trier, in the apartment Franca and Jenna rented.
Jenna said to Franca, "Your suggestion worked. I've digested the Witch potion. Turns out, getting close to mystical dangers was the key."
Franca's face lit up with joy.
"Are you going to take a couple of days to adjust before going to the sacrificial square in the underground catacombs for the advancement, or do it now?"
Jenna pursed her lips and said, "My spiritual intuition tells me it's best to do it now."

Chapter 831: Something's Wrong

When Lumian withdrew the headless corpse of the Abscessed Hand and activated the black mark on his right shoulder, he heard Julie's voice along with the sharp, exaggerated sound of a heavy object falling rapidly.

Instinctively, he chose the farthest place he could sense as his teleportation destination.

Just as Lumian's figure vanished, Albus entered the area with two iron puppets.

He hadn't been influenced by Lumian's feigned attempt to rush towards the mountain of corpses. Instead, he took advantage of Lumian's blindness, conjuring a blazing-white flame spear and manually hurling it forward to drive Lumian out of the corridor, forcing him to face potential dangers and possible concentrated attacks.

Albus himself lagged two to three meters behind, allowing him ample time to react—if Lumian were to be surrounded or controlled, Albus could avoid the dangerous zone and approach the mountain of corpses from the side.

Of course, Albus couldn't afford to fall too far behind. Lumian had just proven he could prevent Wanak from attacking him, potentially reaching the destination quickly and unhindered. If Albus delayed for more than ten to twenty seconds before entering the area, Lumian might have already made direct contact with 0-01!

In war, acting too quickly or too slowly can both lead to failure... As this thought crossed Albus's mind, he heard the terrifying explosion of something hitting the ground.

One of his iron puppets looked up, seeing a massive meteor engulfed in bright flames, illuminating the entire area. It plummeted towards the armored soldiers and countless corpses in the wasteland, heading towards the entrance area where Albus and Wanak were.

The meteor fell faster and faster, soon surpassing the speed of sound.

Further away, Julie, wearing a slit low-cut dress, stood in midair with the help of icy steps, holding a lantern.

With a sapphire ring on her left hand, she drew a downward arc, pointing at where Wanak and Albus were.

"Son of a bitch!"

For the first time since entering Morora, Albus cursed uncontrollably in his mind.

Isn't she supposed to not have invoked divine descent yet?

Isn't she not in a state of divine descent?
How could this sow summon a meteor?
What about Morora's rules? What about 0-01? Shouldn't there be some restrictions? This is the ability of a Demoness of Catastrophe! And this Demoness isn't even blindfolded!
Something's wrong!
Although the meteor hadn't reached the level to destroy a city, or the true power of a Demoness of Catastrophe, Albus still felt genuine fear at that moment.
As a member of the Red of War rebuilt by the ancestor, he could concentrate his power towards the King of Angels, share some of the power in return, and distribute part of the damage he received. However, in Morora, within the core area of sealing 0-01, this special interaction was significantly weakened. Albus could at most temporarily use Sequence 4 powers and some weakened higher abilities, but could only transfer a third of the damage at most.
Now, even if he could transfer half or two-thirds of the damage, the remaining part would still be more than his current body could bear.
If the meteor had fallen instantly, Albus would have already turned into a charred corpse.
Wearing a black blindfold, he leaned back slightly, his hair igniting with red flames extending to his back.
Beneath his skin, his bones and flesh faintly glowed with an iron-black hue.
Next, he transformed into a blazing white flame spear, carrying the two iron puppets rapidly to the right.
He had borrowed the Red Angel's power. The plan was to first avoid the meteor's impact zone, then use the ancestor's damage sharing, his temporary metal transformation, and the two iron puppets as shields to survive the subsequent impact.
Yes, Albus didn't bring the iron puppets because he was fond of them or because he didn't want to lose his "eyes."
They made excellent shields!
As the primary target, Wanak made the same choice as Albus, but without the final protection of the iron puppets, and was hindered by layers of invisible webs around him.
As the strands of web became visible, turning grayish-white, Wanak's blazing white flame spear slowed down.
Bang!
The blazing meteor hit the ground about ten meters behind Wanak.
Boom!

Rolling dust, intense flames, and terrifying shockwaves engulfed Wanak.
The metal-colored body of Morora's most dangerous person cracked instantly, turning into a charred corpse.
Albus, who had fled some distance, was slammed into the white flame spear by the rushing shockwave, driving it to the ground.
With a clanging sound, the first iron puppet, acting as a shield, quickly dented and partially shattered, instantly losing its puppet-like feel and becoming scrap metal.
Next, the second iron puppet suffered severe damage, and then Albus Medici, who emerged from the flame spear state, spat a mouthful of blazing blood, his metalized body sustaining damage.
Not knowing where he had teleported to, Lumian first heard the explosion, then felt the tangible shockwave slam into him, followed by the burning flames.
His ears momentarily deafened, unable to draw knowledge from the brass earplugs. His whole body was flung out, but the shockwave's intensity had dropped to a level a Reaper could withstand.
As for the flames carried by the shockwave, they could only ignite clothes, bandages, and hair, barely causing significant burns to his body, and were quickly extinguished by his flame control ability.
Thua!
Lumian landed heavily, almost dropping the carbide lamp in his hand.
The burnt bandages on his face fell off, but fortunately, he kept his eyes shut.
At the same time, Lumian felt the headless corpse of the Abscessed Hand in his right hand and the rotting head in his left hand become agitated, each dragging his body towards the other with terrifying force.
Lumian didn't stop them; instead, he released his grip.
He once again activated the black mark on his right shoulder, teleporting to the limit of his current sensing range.
He needed to distance himself from the merging parts of the Abscessed Hand to avoid becoming the first target of attack. Otherwise, he might find himself surrounded and attacked!
When choosing a teleportation destination, Lumian deliberately avoided the impact zone and the place where Julie's voice had come from.
In the thick, smoky environment, Lumian's figure disappeared, and the two rotting parts of the Abscessed Hand moved towards each other.
The headless corpse grasped the tangled-haired head with its only

hand, urgently placing it on its neck.
But this attempt was hindered by some force, as if an unspoken rule in the underground mausoleum required the head and body to remain separate.
Of course, the obstruction didn't truly prevent the head from reattaching; it only increased the difficulty and slowed the reassembly process.
On the other side, the rolling flames and scattered dust calmed down a bit. Julie, standing on the icy steps, saw that Wanak had lost his life force, lying on the ground with deep cracks and charred marks all over his body.
She quietly sighed in relief.
Wanak had always been her most dreaded opponent. She regretted that Lumian fled early, missing the chance to team up and kill Wanak.
Just then, Wanak's charred body moved.
The most dangerous person in Morora leaped up, with two dark red flames burning in his eye sockets.
He had become an undead creature!
For Wanak, who was a special puppet of 0-01, being alive or existing as an undead made little difference.
Moreover, as an undead, he could tap into additional powers!
He spread his arms, tilted his head back slightly, and let out a roar like a battle cry.
Suddenly, the lantern Julie held went out, and the flames around the mountain of corpses were extinguished. Only the lantern in Albus's hand and the carbide lamp Lumian held, protected by their Hunter powers, flickered but continued to burn.
Darkness surged back but failed to engulf Julie.
Nothing? Using the last iron puppet as his eyes, Albus couldn't help but frown upon seeing this scene.
That sapphire ring can protect Julie from the underground mausoleum's dark corrosion and dissolution?
That doesn't make sense!
Even if it could, why did Julie carry the lantern before? To mislead us?
And, there shouldn't be a Demoness of Catastrophe's ability, even if it's a weakened version...
Something's definitely wrong!
At this moment, Julie let out a low, soul-scratching laugh and pointed her left hand skyward again.
In the darkness above, faint light appeared as sharp icicles formed, raining down like a storm towards the wasteland, targeting Wanak, Albus, and Lumian.

Wanak roared again.
It was like a battle drum, striking Julie's heart and causing her to stiffen momentarily.
Next, a tornado connecting heaven and earth formed, sweeping all the icicles and reversing towards Julie.
At that moment, whether it was Lumian with his eyes shut, Albus with his eyes covered, or Julie and Wanak with normal vision, they all felt the world shake and heard the creaking sound of the void around them.
The rotting corpse of the Abscessed Hand had finally reattached its head to its neck.

Chapter 832: Reunion

The rotting chunks of flesh on the blue-black corpse's neck and head began to wriggle and merge back together.

It felt as if the whole world started to shake, with the void around them creaking.

Bang! Bang! Bang!

It was as if something outside the void was pounding forcefully, trying to get in.

Crack! A strange, ethereal breaking sound came from afar, piercing Lumian's ears.

Is Hand Bro trying to get in and reunite with its body?

Is the breaking sound a sign that the seal is temporarily broken?

Lumian, with his eyes still tightly shut, could only speculate from the sounds he heard and the movements he felt.

Just as these thoughts crossed his mind, he heard the metallic, scraping voice of an iron puppet several meters away: "Next to the assembled corpse, the space is cracking like glass."

This was Albus, relaying to Lumian what he saw through the iron puppet and the detail he thought was most important.

Unable to see, Lumian had teleported near Albus-he had to avoid the impact zone and Julie's location while staying away from the Abscessed Hand's corpse. The choices were limited, making an encounter with Albus likely.

Cracking like glass... Hearing Albus's description, Lumian suddenly had a realization.

He had been puzzled by Julie's display of confidence and the terrifying commotion she created.

He felt that if he hadn't teleported away in time, he would surely have died from such an attack.

This exceeded his assessment of Julie's strength, making him suspect she was in a state of divine descent, though it clearly didn't seem that way.

Now, Lumian had a vague guess.

Amid the intense shaking of the ground, Albus stopped using the iron puppet's voice and spoke directly, "Do you think it looks like a mirror shattering?"

A mirror... Yes! Lumian instantly understood the situation.

This is the mirror world!

This is an extension or projection of that special mirror world around 0-01!

After Julie and Celeste reached their destination, they set a trap, creating an entrance to the mirror world at the corpse mountain's entrance. So, whether it was Wanak, Albus, or himself, none of

them saw the two Demonesses when they peered into the corridor, but were attacked after entering.
The Demoness of Black had told Franca that the Demoness Sect once controlled that special mirror world, losing some control after the War of the Four Emperors, and further diminishing after the Pale Disaster.
At this moment, Julie must have already worn the divine artifact left by the Primordial Demoness, possessing various special powers. One of these might be the limited use of the special mirror world's power.
With the special mirror world's support, she could launch such a terrifying attack!
If my guess is correct, and this really is the mirror world... Lumian felt the world's shaking, listened to the sounds of the void breaking, and the commotion caused by Julie and Wanak attacking the Abscessed Hand's corpse. He suddenly turned his head towards Albus.
He asked in a deep voice, "Is Julie blindfolded?"
"No," Albus replied firmly.
As expected! Lumian decisively opened his eyes.
If this truly was the mirror world, there was no need to worry about 0-01's power leaking out and creating a corresponding Mirror Person through the eyes, the mystical window of the soul.
In the next second, scenes filled Lumian's vision: Fallen soldiers in iron-black armor like stalks of straw, the corpse mountain several hundred meters to the side, Julie standing on icy steps with an unlit lantern by her feet, and Wanak with dark red flames burning in his eye sockets.
At this moment, Julie and Wanak both saw the bluish-black corpse of the Abscessed Hand as the primary target, launching rounds of attacks. To them, it seemed more dangerous than each other, Lumian, or Albus.
"Indeed..." Albus's voice carried a hint of laughter.
He even sighed in relief without hiding it when Lumian looked over.
Lumian's thoughts raced, quickly understanding what Albus meant by "indeed": This guy was also guessing this is the mirror world but couldn't be sure, so he encouraged me to open my eyes to verify?
Dammit! That's so sneaky!
Good thing I was certain before I opened my eyes!
In Lumian's sight, Albus, in his black jacket with red patterns and hair like burning flames, removed the burned blindfold and laughed.

"No wonder that Demoness kept carrying a lit lantern, to mislead us into not thinking this was the mirror world.
"No wonder nothing happened when her lantern went out. Truly insidious."
"Are you any less insidious?" Lumian replied just as the Abscessed Hand's corpse experienced a sudden change.
The surrounding void cracked like glass struck by a fist, dense white cracks spreading outward, becoming sparse and transparent.
Crack!
The cluster of dense white cracks shattered, and a rotting, pus-dripping, bluish-black swollen hand flew in.
The Abscessed Hand finally broke through the barriers and arrived here!
As soon as it appeared, it used Spirit World Traversal to place itself directly at the severed wrist.
Seeing this, Julie had a strong sense of foreboding.
She immediately let the sapphire ring on her left hand emit a faint light.
Next, she let her hands fall and then lifted them from below.
The ground shook violently, and a small volcano quickly formed under the bluish-black corpse of the Abscessed Hand, spewing out red-white lava and clouds of dust.
This immediately engulfed the bluish-black rotting corpse, melting its flesh and attempting to solidify it within the volcanic rock.
Wanak, with dark red flames in his eye sockets, had blood slowly oozing from his brow, twisting into a strange pattern.
As this change occurred, Wanak raised his right hand.
The dead soldiers in iron-black armor lying on the ground stood up again, their eye sockets rekindling with pale or dark red flames.
Wanak then formed an almost entirely green flame spear with a hint of blazing white, hurling it at the bluish-black corpse struggling in the fierce lava.
The undead soldiers followed suit, creating blazing-white flame spears, mimicking Wanak's action, and throwing them at the target.
Swoosh! Swoosh! Swoosh!
The flame spears nearly obscured half the sky.
Seeing this, Albus moved towards the entrance, with Lumian silently following.
Soon, the flame spears covered the bluish-black corpse of the Abscessed Hand, tearing it into countless small chunks of rotting flesh.
These pieces ignited, falling into the red-white lava.

Suddenly, a part of the lava unexpectedly caved in, and the flaming rotting flesh seemed to be drawn by an invisible force, gathering together.
In the blink of an eye, the bluish-black corpse reappeared in the lava and flames.
The rotting flesh on its surface peeled off in pieces with flames, revealing fresh, vibrant flesh and pale skin as healthy as if it hadn't seen sunlight for a long time.
Julie and Wanak's attacks continued, with hailstones like cannonballs, black flames, lightning strikes, and flying fireballs, but the damage couldn't keep up with the reassembly and healing speed of the Abscessed Hand's complete body.
Within seconds, the charred skin and rotting flesh on the Abscessed Hand's face also fell off, revealing a delicate, handsome face.
Thick, long black eyelashes fluttered, and beneath the soft, pale eyelids, the eyes began to move slowly.
Whether living in the Demonesses' circle like Julie, frequently dealing with Demonesses like Lumian, or the deeply rooted Albus Medici, as well as the uniquely conditioned Wanak, they all held their breath at this moment, briefly entranced by the indescribable beauty.
It was like admiring a perfect, timeless work of art.
They didn't notice their hair growing visibly, previous injuries healing rapidly, and consumed spirituality replenishing as if a rainstorm had filled numerous evaporated lakes.
They saw that on the flawless but slightly feminine face, under the high nose bridge, the just-right lips parted slightly, revealing clean white teeth. The entirely white yet clearly muscular and perfectly proportioned body was completely exposed.
Seeing what was between the Abscessed Hand's legs, Julie instinctively swallowed, clenching her right hand.
The perfect body leaned back slightly, seemingly in some pain.
His chest began to swell, his nether region shrinking rapidly, and his body's lines softened.
He grew increasingly beautiful, nearing the limit of perfection.
But this transformation was stalled, as if missing some crucial element to succeed.
Taking advantage of this stall, Albus broke free from the stunning beauty's shock and immersion, touched the stubble around his mouth, burned it off with flames, and slightly frowned at Lumian.
"What kind of monster did you put together?"
Lumian, barely recovering, chuckled. "I don't know either."
"..." Albus was momentarily speechless.

Lumian's gaze lingered on the complete corpse of the Abscessed Hand.

Indeed, it was a bro, but he seemed to be turning into a sister.

But if this change is due to Beyonder characteristics, like a Witch's, the gender should be fixed, not reverting to male after death and then turning female upon resurrection...

This feels more like corruption... He was killed and sealed in pieces before the corruption could fully change his body? To prevent his reassembly and revival, and the return of the corruption?

Now, what's stopping that corruption from fully transforming him? Is it an issue with the source of the corruption, or something special about Morora?

Just as Lumian made some guesses based on his limited mystical knowledge, he saw the white eyelids of the Abscessed Hand twitch and slowly open.

They revealed a pair of beautiful, crystalline scarlet eyes.

Chapter 833: Activation

Lumian and the others were all captivated by those beautiful, crystalline eyes, feeling as if their very souls were being drawn into the depths of that scarlet.

But those eyes soon filled with irrational rage, madness, and chaos, creating a vortex of indescribable emptiness at their core.

It made all who saw it feel a deep discomfort, as if a flawless object had suddenly cracked.

Just as Lumian broke free from the trance, he saw the scarlet eyes of the Abscessed Hand focusing on him.

It first noticed its own contractee.

It showed no hesitation, displaying a ruthless, bloodthirsty impulse.

Lumian's heart skipped a beat, and his body hair stood on end.

Damn, it's going to attack me first! Lumian immediately prepared to teleport to the side of the corpse mountain in the mirror world, to avoid the impending attack from the Abscessed Hand.

He felt it was unfair-he had only been watching and hadn't tried to interfere with the reassembly of Hand Bro, yet he was being targeted.

The real culprits were Julie and Wanak!

And I went through all that trouble to gather your body. I don't expect you to thank me, but at least don't kill me first! Lumian grumbled internally while activating the black mark on his right shoulder, following his Hunter instincts and personality.

At this moment, both Julie and Wanak sensed that the body, which had transformed from a rotting mess to near perfection, had become even more dangerous.

Taking advantage of the Abscessed Hand's focus on Lumian, they each prepared their most powerful and effective attacks.

Julie raised her left hand and pointed to the sky.

High above, dark clouds swirled into a massive vortex, driven by a violent wind. At the center of the vortex, an iron-black meteor began to take shape, heavy and ominous.

The Abscessed Hand's gaze shifted from Lumian's disappearing figure to Julie.

In those crystalline, scarlet eyes, Julie's figure in her slit dress was reflected, followed by the image of the Abscessed Hand raising its white palm.

That hand clenched into a fist.

Julie's neck made a cracking sound, visibly indenting inward.

Crack, crack, the mirrors on her body shattered, but she couldn't escape her predicament.

She floated upward slowly, her face contorted in pain as if someone were lifting her by the neck.
Her hands instinctively pulled back, trying to pry open the invisible hand strangling her.
The forming iron-black meteor disintegrated, the wind stopped, and the clouds dispersed.
Lumian, who had just appeared at the side of the corpse mountain, saw this and genuinely marveled at the terror of the Abscessed Hand.
If this had happened outside, carrying out the contract without having Madam Magician as a safeguard would be suicide.
At this moment, Lumian felt a strange sense of relief, as if an invisible shackle within him had been broken.
He had completed the pact and was no longer barred from acquiring godhood.
Lumian's gaze swept over Julie, whose mouth was opening and her face turning a darker shade of blue and purple. He frowned in confusion.
Where is Celeste?
Julie is responsible for blocking and interfering with intruders in the mirror world. *Is Celeste targeting 0-01?*
His thoughts raced as he looked towards Albus Medici, now several hundred meters away.
This guy is also suspicious...
He could influence and use the iron puppets in the underground tomb.
Why did he wait until Julie and Celeste took action to enter here?
Was he preparing something or afraid he couldn't get past Wanak, waiting for a chaotic opportunity?
Just as Julie's eyes began to bulge and she resolved to unleash the full power of her sapphire ring, the mirror world shook violently again, and clear cracks appeared all around.
From within these cracks, nearly invisible flames emerged and seeped through.
In an instant, the sky and ground began to burn.
Lumian suddenly felt an urge to submit, his body instinctively avoiding the nearly invisible, flower-like flames and the melting earth, rocks, and void.
He realized his resistance to burning damage was useless against these flames; contact would surely reduce him to ashes.
At the same time, his right palm became unbearably hot, and a violent, crazed aura surged within him, unable to break free from the icy, deathly stillness of the Underworld Daoist mark's restraints.

The residual aura of Blood Emperor Alista Tudor had fully activated, completely triggered!
This left Lumian feeling like an overinflated balloon, pushed to its limit and still being pumped.
The pain was excruciating.
The area around the Abscessed Hand, where the mirror cracks were most numerous and the flames most dense, became a burning hell. Its head lowered, and the hand squeezing Julie's neck loosened.
Witnessing this change and feeling an indescribable pain, Lumian recalled a passage from the 0-01 sealing information: "Beyonders with strength surpassing Sequence 5 are forbidden from approaching.
Warning, Beyonders with strength surpassing Sequence 5 are forbidden from approaching!"
Now, the reassembled and revived Abscessed Hand clearly possessed strong godhood.
0-01 has detected the presence of a demigod level Beyonder and is forcibly breaking the mirror world's barrier?
My Blood Emperor mark was stimulated by 0-01's aura and triggered uncontrollably? Lumian thought painfully, his thoughts disjointed.
Albus Medici also lowered his head, his flaming hair growing another inch.
Julie fell to the top of the frosty steps, finally escaping a near-death state.
Her long, pale neck was swollen and bruised, marked by deep, blood-embedded finger imprints.
Julie exhaled, raising her left hand once more.
She intended to seize this chance while the enemy, who nearly killed her, was restrained by 0-01's power and eradicate it completely.
On the other side, Wanak ignited nearly blue flames.
He stretched out his right palm, directing the flames forward to form a giant fireball.
The fireball attracted the nearly invisible flames around it, drawing them in layer by layer.
Behind Wanak, his undead army was ignited by the flames seeping through the cracks, but instead of turning to ash, they merged with these flames, one by one flying into Wanak's fireball.
The fireball grew larger, its color gradually turning purple.
Wanak, his eye sockets burning with dark red flames, bit his lips tightly, reaching his limit.
He then pushed the enormous, pale purple fireball towards the

Abscessed Hand.
As the fireball touched the Abscessed Hand's perfect body, a meteor ignited by air friction fell from the sky.
The meteor fell faster and faster, hitting the immobilized target directly.
Struggling against the residual aura of the Blood Emperor, Lumian first saw the explosion of light, then the rising dust, and finally heard the deafening boom, feeling the earth shake wildly.
The world turned colorless and dark.
Did it work? Julie eagerly looked towards the area where the meteor had fallen.
Though it was filled with dust, smoke, and invisible wind, Julie used her connection with the mirror world to make her eyes like mirrors, reflecting the scene at the explosion's core.
The perfect body had been blown to pieces, its flesh either charred or vaporized, leaving only a broken, black skeleton standing.
But on that skeleton, new tender flesh was growing, and the bone was slowly shedding its charred appearance.
It's still not dead? The weakened Julie felt an immense heaviness in her heart.
In the next second, Julie's forehead throbbed with pain, as if the flesh there had a will of its own, trying to break free from her skin.
Her ears buzzed, and her mind was filled with images of lofty, gently floating scarlet flags.
Her face twisted in pain, she thought with difficulty, H-has 0-01 noticed me?
I-I can't hold on any longer...
I'm going to become its puppet...
Julie's body bent forward under the invisible weight, her eyes turning black with visible veins.
She looked at Wanak on the wasteland, at the rising dust, her gaze growing crazed, resembling her state when first entering Morora.
Clenching her teeth, she whispered, "I will take everyone here with me!
Celeste, the rest is up to you! Remember the famous line from 'Eternal Love'? Stupid, live well!"
Live well! Julie silently screamed, and her sapphire ring burst into blinding light.
She was invoking the Primordial One's divine descent!
In the light, the bloody mark on Julie's forehead faded quickly, her hair floated and grew longer and thicker.
Gray-white quickly spread around her, turning the entire wasteland gray-white.
Lumian stiffened as if turned to stone, the residual aura of the

Blood Emperor in his right palm causing endless burning pain.
Then he saw Julie, transformed by the gray-white, suddenly turn towards him.
...
Trier, in the sacrificial square at the entrance to the third level of the underground catacombs.
Franca had finished checking the surroundings, ensuring no one else was present, and had set up a mirror maze.
"You can drink the potion now." She nodded at Jenna.
Jenna took out the necessary materials from her Traveler's Bag and mixed the Pleasure potion in a crystal glass.
Without hesitation, she raised the glass and gulped it down.
She felt herself float as if walking on clouds, her body pricked by tiny, needle-like pains. Her hair, influenced by an unseen force, defied gravity, extending away.
Jenna vaguely saw snakes slithering through the surrounding gloom, rising up.
Each snake had a strange eye on its head, giving Jenna a strong sense of danger, as if she would be torn apart any second.
The hallucination quickly faded, and Jenna saw a blurry, holy figure in a plain white robe.
The figure sighed in a hollow, ethereal voice. "As a woman, do you know how dangerous this path is?"
"I have no choice," Jenna replied, half-awake and dazed.
The holy figure was silent for a moment and then said,"Make peace with your mirror self, for you were always one. Any other questions?"
The figure started to fade as if about to disappear.
Jenna blurted out, "Are you Lady Krismona? Who is your father?"
As soon as she asked, Jenna wanted to slap herself.
Had she gotten into the habit of discussing nonsense with Lumian and Franca? There were so many important things to ask, yet she asked such an irrelevant question!
The holy figure in the plain white robe was silent for a moment and then said, "My father is Alista Tudor."

Chapter 834: Divine Descent

The entire world seemed to turn gray and white, even the almost blue flames on Wanak's body solidifying into stone.

Lumian's first instinct was to reach into his Traveler's Bag to retrieve the mirror cufflink. He intended to use the opportunity, created by 0-01 breaking through the mirror world's barrier and Julie being too preoccupied to intervene, to escape the mirror world and return to the real corpse mountain, avoiding the impending divine battle.

He realized Julie had been praying for a divine descent.

And now, a fragment of the Primordial Demoness's power had descended!

Lumian couldn't avoid the influence. His body turned gray and stiff. The burning pain from the residual aura of the Blood Emperor in his right palm was the only thing keeping him moving, allowing him to slowly reach into his bag and grab the glass-like cufflink.

Just as he withdrew his hand, before he could activate the mirror cufflink, Julie, with her hair floating in the air, turned to look at him.

Her hair had turned raven black like thick, long serpents, and her eyes were now a brilliant, crystalline blue.

In that brief moment of eye contact, Lumian lost control of his body.

He saw the grayness spreading around him, climbing from his feet. Every inch of skin and flesh it touched turned to real stone.

Why am I the first target?

Wanak and Albus are far more dangerous, and the Abscessed Hand isn't completely dead. *Why target the weakest one first?*

Shouldn't I be caught in a broad attack instead?

Then I'd have a chance to escape the mirror world and wait out the divine descent!

Facing this hopeless situation, Lumian, as an Ascetic, couldn't help but feel intense anger and frustration.

Despite his limbs turning to stone, he tried to channel his spirituality to activate the Mirror Cufflink and other contract marks on his body.

But as his spirituality approached the grayness, it solidified, turning to stone and falling like rain to the ground.

His neck turned to stone, then his face and brain began to gray.

His last effort was to look toward Albus Medici's position.

The wasteland was empty.

The descendant of the Red Angel was gone.

He had disappeared or escaped somehow!
Son of a sow... Lumian couldn't help but curse.
In the next moment, his thoughts seemed to turn to stone.
His gray eyes saw Julie, transformed and radiating charm even to stone, floating in mid-air, engulfed in black flames.
The Demoness descended like a giant bird, trailing black flames that twisted and branched like countless serpents, their long tails gently swaying.
Silently, the mirror world began to collapse, dark voids mingling with black flames, swallowing the still skeletal Abscessed Hand, the immovable Wanak, and the petrified Lumian...
The end of this world had come.
Silent darkness filled every void.
After an indeterminate time, a violent, invisible flame flickered to life, illuminating Lumian's mind.
He felt the burning pain and icy rot in his right palm, the heat in his left chest.
He snapped his eyes open and saw a hundred-meter-high mountain of corpses and bones.
I'm... alive? Lumian was bewildered.
His last memory was turning to stone and the destruction of the mirror world by Julie.
He instinctively looked down, seeing the grayness rapidly recede from his body.
This confirmed it wasn't a nightmare or hallucination.
How did I survive?
Did someone help me?
Lumian doubted he could have survived such an apocalypse alone.
At that moment, he heard Albus Medici's voice, tinged with amusement.
"You can traverse the mirror world too, just like my escape plan, and you did it while partially petrified. Impressive. Did you rely on that cufflink in your hand?"
Lumian turned to see Albus, in a tattered black and red jacket, a crystal necklace around his wrist.
Albus had his eyes closed but was surrounded by undead soldiers in iron-black armor, their eyes burning with pale or dark red flames.
Lumian remembered he should also close his eyes.
This is likely the real area around the corpse mountain. Keeping his eyes open might result in being silently replaced by his mirror self!
Nothing happened... Just as I expected, I'm now Wanak's ally, one of the dangers, a puppet of 0-01. No need to fear any forbidden

rules anymore... If only I'd realized it earlier, instead of being stunned and confused by my survival, I could have closed my eyes before Albus looked over, taking advantage of the situation to trick him... Lumian regretted this missed opportunity but also started to understand how Albus avoided the divine descent of the Primordial Demoness.
Like him, he took advantage of 0-01 breaking through the mirror world's barrier and Julie being too preoccupied with her prayer to notice them.
He used an item that allowed him to traverse the mirror world and escape back to the real mausoleum.
The only difference was, Julie, who hadn't fully completed her divine descent, targeted Lumian instead of Albus, allowing him to escape while he couldn't.
Why were you watching me? You should've focused on sealing the entire world. Then no one could've escaped! Lumian mentally cursed Julie, realizing that he must have activated the Mirror Cufflink just before his thoughts completely turned to stone, which saved him.
But as he checked, he realized something was wrong.
The Mirror Cufflink still had two uses left!
He hadn't used the Beyonder item at all!
Wh- *Could Archbishop Heraberg secretly have helped me?* After all, gods need special arrangements to descend a fraction of their power into Morola's underground mausoleum. It's unlikely an external entity intervened suddenly... It couldn't be Julie, who suddenly felt how kind I was as a boss and pushed me out of the mirror world at the last moment, could it? Lumian decided to put these thoughts aside for now.
Now wasn't the time to seek the truth!
There were still many dangers ahead!
He glanced at Albus, noticing the Red Angel's descendant studying him through the eyes of the surrounding undead soldiers.
Indeed, Albus didn't attack me just now, not because he didn't want to, but because he had concerns. My actions exceeded his expectations, and my escape was full of mysteries. He feared acting rashly might trigger a trap... Lumian's thoughts were interrupted by a sudden change in the sky.
Julie, wearing a long slit dress, appeared in the dimly lit sky.
Lumian's scalp tingled.
She's still alive and in the divine descent state?
He quickly noticed Julie's figure was unusually transparent, and the sapphire ring on her left hand was gone.
Phew... He heard Albus Medici sigh in relief.

Julie lowered her head and gazed at the top of the corpse mountain.
Following her gaze, Lumian saw a two to three meter tall iron-black metal pole with a charred banner at the top. The banner was covered in dark red and black bloodstains.
Just a glance made Lumian feel dizzy, his neck inexplicably stinging, and the smell of blood seeped from various parts of his face and forehead.
0-01? Salinger's Blood Banner? My corruption has deepened... It seems I don't need to finish reading all the remaining books. Mastering the current one should be enough... I can't rely on such direct corruption to save time; it's easy to surpass the critical point... Lumian quickly averted his gaze, noticing Celeste standing not far from the banner.
The Demoness, wearing a black robe, was looking down at the spot where the iron-black metal pole was embedded in the top of the corpse mountain.
The next second, she sensed something, raised her head, and looked at Julie in the sky.
Julie's lips curled into a beautiful and radiant smile.
She parted her moist lips as if to say, "I'll leave it to you."
In an instant, Lumian saw Julie's figure rapidly fade and shrink, turning into a puddle of filthy blood.
The blood, only palm-sized, fell straight down.
Its target was the charred banner of 0-01, seemingly to become one of the many bloodstains on it.
Celeste finally snapped out of her daze and shouted in pain, "Julie!"
At that moment, Albus's expression changed slightly. He transformed into a long spear of blazing white with a hint of blue flames, shooting towards the banner in mid-air.
He seemed unwilling to let Julie's remaining blood stain the charred banner.
You're finally putting in some effort... Lumian muttered, not rushing to follow Albus to the top of the corpse mountain to leave a mark or stop him and Celeste.
He planned to "join" after Albus and Celeste had fought for a while.
Of course, Lumian could see that Albus valued Julie's blood and didn't want it to become a mark on the 0-01 banner. If Albus didn't perform well and failed to stop the blood from reaching its intended spot, Lumian would teleport to help in time.
Seizing this rare opportunity, Lumian took an item from his Traveler's Bag.
It wasn't the Sword of Courage but the Devil's Whispers bone ring from Hisoka.

Chapter 835: Source of Corruption

As soon as Lumian's fingers touched the glossy black bone ring, he felt searing pain spread from the point of contact throughout his entire body.

He looked down to see thin wisps of purple-blue sulfur flames emerging from every pore, charring the surrounding skin bit by bit and giving off a pungent odor.

This pain was so familiar to Lumian that he merely furrowed his brow slightly, gritted his teeth, his expression barely changing.

He then took out the Devil's Whispers bone ring, slipping it onto his right ring finger with the twisted, agonized Devil's face facing up.

Lumian's gaze turned icy cold, a deep blackness forming in his blue irises that no light could penetrate.

The malice within him rapidly swelled, overwhelming the Ascetic's tolerance and clashing fiercely with his own will in a fragile balance, the excess spilling outward.

Lumian took out some Ice Lemon Fish fillets from his Traveler's Bag, stuffing them into his mouth and chewing to temporarily boost his fire resistance a bit. At the same time, he sensed the surrounding malice.

He was searching for the Mirror Person Guei!

One negative effect of the Devil's Whispers was that it made the wearer and anyone within a hundred meters more prone to malicious thoughts and impulsive actions. And since Mirror People tended toward extremism and distortion to begin with, they would be even more obviously affected.

With this premise, the Devil's Whispers also granted the Malice Perception ability, allowing the wearer to sense if those around them harbored ill intent. It could not detect dangers in their brewing stages like a true Devil, but it was still a mystical form of perception.

As long as the Mirror Person developed malicious intentions toward him within a certain distance, Lumian believed he could use Malice Perception to pinpoint their location!

Sulfur flames slowly burning across his body, Lumian's icy gaze swept the surrounding area littered with corpses clad in iron-black full-body armor amid smoldering fires, remnants of some recent slaughter.

Faint, nearly invisible flames also flickered at various points on the corpse mountain itself.

They illuminated the wasteland and sky, preventing total darkness from taking hold and allowing Lumian, Albus, and Celeste to

remain visible despite no longer holding their carbide lamps or lanterns.
After just a second or two, the corners of Lumian's mouth curled into a cruel, cold smile.
He sensed intense malice directed at him from about ten meters behind and to the side!
It emanated from a corpse–no, from the smooth, mirror-black breastplate on the corpse.
Found you... Without turning around, Lumian abruptly teleported to the corpse's side amid his slow movements and activated the Mirror Cufflink.
Through the metal mirror's surface, Mirror Person Guei peered outward from within the black breastplate.
After discovering the two Demonesses had used the mirror world to reach this area, he had slipped out quietly, leaving it to Julie and Celeste.
He wasn't worried they would beat him to 0-01, since based on his knowledge and on-site investigations, he believed no one could gain 0-01's approval before its agent Wanak was eliminated. Brute force or exploiting loopholes would achieve nothing until the "throne" was vacant and chaos ensued, giving others an opportunity.
Guei felt relieved he had made this wise choice, having directly experienced the mirror world projection's destruction just now.
A mere aftershock of that apocalyptic scene could have vaporized him instantly.
Confirming Wanak's death, he then slipped back through an ordinary mirror world to the corpse mountain's vicinity, seeking a chance to gain 0-01's approval and take it for himself.
He saw Julie turning to filthy blood and fall, Albus Medici transforming into a fiery spear to stop it, Celeste screaming Albus's name in anguish, and Lumian Lee calmly putting on the ring, preparing to make his entrance and reap the spoils of victory.
An intense malice welled up within Guei: You're all obstructing me from completing my mission!
After entering Morora as one of the rare Readers turned Mirror Person, Guei had initially felt confident, supplementing his knowledge at the Knowledge Cathedral while conducting field investigations to gather intel for his final operation.
But after covertly observing the capabilities of Albus Medici, Wanak, Julie, and Lumian Lee, Guei began doubting himself.
Which of them could I actually defeat one-on-one by exploiting the special mirror world's power? Probably only Lumian Lee, the one my superior warned me to watch out for...

And when it comes to learning speed, although I far outpace Lumian, it seems I can't handle nearly as much corruption as him...
Am I really the one with the least hope among these people?
Shaken by these doubts, Guei devised a plan to lurk in the shadows, using his special nature to emerge once the heavyweights had clashed and weakened each other, then sweep up the remains.
So far, his plan had progressed smoothly.
The biggest obstacle, Wanak, and the most dangerous threat, Julie, were dead, their souls completely extinguished with no chance of revival through 0-01's leaking power as undead beings!
Once Albus Medici and Celeste decide the winner between them, I can join the fray, kill the survivor, and take on the weakest Lumian Lee alone...
Should I, should I ambush Lumian while he's off-guard? He's no Demoness or Mirror Person, with no substitute active, a single hit could kill him for real...
These malicious thoughts grew clearer and stronger in Guei's mind.
But before he could decide, Lumian's figure abruptly enlarged, appearing right before his eyes.
Then Lumian vanished from his sight.
In his place, a viscous pool of black liquid emerged underfoot, as if the deepest, most vile desires of the human heart had taken physical form.
Desire Incarnation!
The black liquid suddenly surged upward, enveloping Guei.
Crack!
The sound of shattering glass came from within the inky fluid as Guei's silhouette appeared on the edge of the dim, empty space behind the metal mirror.
He saw the liquid rapidly coalescing into Lumian's form, chuckling coldly with a fondness of teaching others. "Didn't know I had a Mirror Substitution, did you?"
A direct attack like this only costs me one mirror.
Before the words had left his mouth, an exceptionally violent emotion welled up within Guei.
He instinctively reached for his neck, feeling warm blood.
Pain immediately lanced into his mind.
Crack!
Guei deliberately triggered his own Mirror Substitution, shattering countless shards of glass that rained to the ground.
His silhouette now flickered in another corner behind the mirror,

but a thin, deep bloody gash remained on his neck.
His emotions had become completely frenzied, vicious, and insane. His facial skin rapidly aged and withered like patches of brown tree bark. The words "my child, my child" echoed in his ears as flesh rippled on either shoulder, seeming to sprout additional heads.
His abdomen slowly swelled while his eyes took on a silvery-white with streaks of black. His aura rapidly dissipated as his body visibly decayed, chunks of flesh sloughing off and wriggling like maggots...
Lumian saw the various corruptions afflicting him directly manifested in this stark way.
It was a veritable smorgasbord!
When he used Desire Incarnation, that inky black pool didn't just contain his own emotions and desires, but also those from the corruptive emotions and desires deeply influencing him.
These higher-level corruptions would be difficult for any non-godhood being to resist-even Saints would suffer serious effects!
Facing such potent corruption, failure to proactively trigger one's Mirror Substitution immediately would be too late once the viscous fluid made contact. By then, it would already have tainted the target!
Now Guei was a horrifically corrupted monstrosity.
Seeing the Mirror Person degenerating toward an unspeakable form, Lumian had the intuition that continuing to observe might catalyze a similar transformation within himself.
He immediately stepped back, leaving the metal mirror surface to return to the corpse and surrounding wasteland at the base of the corpse mountain.
He then saw the smooth mirror-like surface of his chest plate, with tendrils of black mist seeping out, like illusory shadows seeming to try and grasp him.
Lumian swiftly turned his body and sprinted toward the corpse mountain peak.
Sometimes transforming into a blazing-white flaming spear to propel himself forward, sometimes teleporting dozens of meters, he continually climbed upward through the mountain formed of corpses and bones, scattered with lingering embers.
He aimed to lead the out-of-control, collapsing Mirror Person Guei, corrupted into monstrosity, to Albus Medici and Celeste, telling them "you're welcome."
Whether climbing by hand and foot, using his contracted abilities for short-range teleports, or ascending in flaming spear form, Lumian felt an immense oppressive presence behind him. An

indescribable, constantly shifting black shadow was cast onto him and his path ahead, inevitably filling him with fear.

He now had no way to know what horrific form the pursuing monster had taken or what state it was in-he only knew for certain it was not something a normal human should observe or discern.

Suddenly, Guei's deep voice rang in his ears: "Mommy..."

Mommy... Lumian's mouth twitched, realizing that even with all the strange corruptions on himself, the one from the Great Mother, from the Omebella bloodline, still stood out as the most exceptional-after all, Mr. Fool had left behind a seal, not a corruption.

Lumian fled even faster.

Finally, he saw the summit of the corpse mountain peak, Celeste and Albus Medici.

Chapter 836: Unorthodox Feint

Albus transformed into a blazing-white, blue-tinged flaming spear, flying to the peak of the corpse mountain, toward Julie's filthy blood descending onto the charred 0-01 banner.

But in the blink of an eye, he lost his target, reverting from his fiery state to land beside the corpse where 0-01 should have been embedded.

At the peak, opening his eyes no longer seemed an issue, but Albus Medici's vision no longer contained the charred banner, Julie's filthy blood, or Celeste.

With his past experience, Albus quickly understood what was happening: This was the mirror world, or a Mirror Maze!

After waiting so long at the peak, Celeste must have made some preparations!

As Albus guessed, this was a Mirror Maze created by multiple mirrors reflecting each other. Celeste stood outside, her gaze pained and distant as she watched the filthy blood race towards the charred flag.

For some reason, the filthy blood slowed its descent, as if repelled by 0-01, but it still sank inexorably, just at a reduced pace.

Albus tried using the crystal necklace coiled around his wrist but found no mirror world to traverse or escape through, confirming he was trapped in the Mirror Maze. He immediately condensed blazing white, blue-tinged fireballs, sending them in all directions to blast the hidden mirrors forming the maze.

As its name implied, the Mirror Maze was just a maze, not a true barrier with defenses!

Thunderous explosions erupted almost simultaneously, yet Albus still could not break through the Mirror Maze.

Not a single mirror had been damaged!

With a slight narrowing of his eyes, Albus decisively abandoned any further such attempts.

Outside the Mirror Maze, Celeste felt the explosive winds and inwardly scoffed.

In other locations, widespread bombardment might overwhelm a Mirror Maze meant to trap Hunters. But here at the corpse mountain's peak, the heart of 0-01's seal, it would not be so easy.

As a Demoness of Affliction corrupted by 0-01 to some degree like Julie, Celeste could wield traces of that special mirror world's power!

The Mirror Maze's mirrors were not at the peak itself, but scattered among the corpses and bones below, their reflections then projected around 0-01's vicinity through that special mirror world,

forming the Mirror Maze.
Seeing Julie's filthy blood nearing the charred banner, Celeste felt a mix of elation and confusion, underlaid by anguish.
From somewhere, she produced a black teardrop-like ornament and affixed it to between her brows.
Inside the Mirror Maze, Albus calmly lowered his head and half-closed his eyes, preparing to do what would inevitably be required.
He murmured in ancient Hermes, "The great God of War, the symbol of iron and blood, the ruler of chaos and strife."
With this three-passage invocation of the honorific name, the iron-black metal flagpole suspending the charred banner shuddered slightly, its drooping flag fully unfurling with a rattling sound despite the stillness, each bloody stain growing vivid.
Julie's filthy bloody halted, hovering a couple meters from 0-01, as if grasped by an unseen hand.
High above, clouds rapidly swirled into an immense vortex tinged with faint purple firelight, larger than the mountain itself, its far end suggesting some vast entity straining against an invisible barrier.
Cracks spread from the Salinger's Blood Banner with snapping sounds, the special mirror world over the peak shattering.
The Mirror Maze dissipated as its special mirror world projection broke apart.
Albus's head snapped up, his irises now flecked with iron-black, a bloody mark stark on his brow.
His gaze fell on Celeste, now adorned with her own black teardrop ornament, meeting her eyes.
Before combat could erupt, Lumian nonchalantly climbed over the peak's edge, a mere seven or eight meters from 0-01.
No communication was needed as Albus and Celeste simultaneously attacked Lumian.
Albus casually thrust out a fist expelling a massive blue-tinged fireball, while frost coalesced around Celeste's head into mirrors, each preceding an eerie, smoldering black flame.
But just as Celeste's icy mirrors would have reflected Lumian, his figure faded, vanishing with a mocking smile.
Behind him, an immense silhouette suddenly loomed into Albus and Celeste's view.
Already over five or six meters tall yet still growing, twisting appendages sprouting, it was covered in patches of brown bark and sickening knobs that oozed clear fluid from the gaps.
For now, the monstrosity cradled a blood-stained, vertebrae-trailing head in one hand, its silvery-black empty eyes dead and sunken.

On either shoulder was a fleshy, head-sized bulge, the surface rippling with some contained liquid.
The next second, the monster leaped to the peak, shedding puddles of wriggling maggot-flesh.
Countless black gaseous tendrils dragged at it from behind, trying to pull it back into the sleek, iron-black breastplate mirror.
The mere sight catalyzed a visceral sensation of corruption in Albus and Celeste.
Celeste's hair billowed outward, rapidly thickening and coarsening, while Albus's face became mapped with protruding black veins.
Boom!
Albus's immense blue-tinged fireball with white remnants exploded against the monstrosity as Celeste's flickering array of frost-mirrors reflected its figure, engulfing it in roiling black flames.
Crack!
The monster shattered mirror-like, its silhouette immediately reappearing beside 0-01, making Albus and Celeste's scalps prickle- it could use Mirror Substitution too.
Raising its severed head, the monstrosity emitted a sound like it came from another world.
Celeste felt herself plunged into cloying, frozen blackness, constrained on all sides in inescapable oppression.
Albus likewise found himself surrounded by stifling darkness.
This was a mystic technique inspired by the Mirror Person's state of being.
At that moment, Lumian, having teleported away to avoid the earlier clash, reappeared at the corpse peak's base.
His silhouette flickered behind Albus in the darkness, mouth opening to harrumph, sending a pale-yellow gaseous breath that washed over him.
For an instant, Albus's eyes went blank, his body swaying before he recovered his senses.
The Red Angel had helped him resist part of the Spell of Harrumph's effects.
Seizing Albus's momentary disorientation, Lumian's left fist blazed with white flames as he struck at his vulnerable point-the neck connecting head and body.
Cull!
As Lumian's fist neared Albus's neck, the member of the Medici family transformed into a humanoid blaze of white, blue-tinged fire.
Not the merger with a flaming spear, but transmutation into

living flame itself.
In this fiery state, his neck was no longer a weakness!
Bang!
Lumian's punch only made the flaming figure waver and dim slightly.
In the next instant, Albus became a roaring blue-tinged flaming spear, bursting through the black icy shackles into the air.
Wheeling about like a javelin cast from the high vortex's hidden depths, he unleashed dozens of blue-streaked white fireballs in a thunderous barrage toward the peak.
Boom! Rumble! Boom boom!
Horrific explosions engulfed the area in relentless succession.
The indescribable monstrosity repeatedly used Mirror Substitution yet could not escape the bombardment's range.
Meanwhile, Lumian had teleported pre-emptively back to the mountain's base.
Still teleporting? Hand Bro isn't dead yet? As a chill ran down Lumian's back, he saw Celeste's face reflected in a nearby corpse's smooth breastplate.
The Demoness had not met Albus's assault with Mirror Substitution, instead deploying a mirror to swiftly traverse the mirror world to the wasteland-one of Lumian's backup plans.
Seeing she did not immediately attack him, Lumian turned his gaze back toward the peak.
He did not regret missing the opportunity to eliminate Albus earlier, as that was the outcome he wanted.
If he had intended to kill Albus with that strike, he would not have used only his Cull ability-he would have surely drawn the Sword of Courage or attacked in his Desire Incarnation form instead.
If I killed Albus now, who would help me deal with Celeste and that monster? Just me alone? Lumian inwardly muttered with obvious malice.
His earlier attack had a hidden purpose: to deceive Albus into thinking his defenses were ineffective against Lumian, to make him believe the pitch-black bone ring on his hand could not target him.
Then, at the crucial moment, he could "surprise" Albus by exploiting this misconception!
The thunderous explosions finally subsided. The corpses and bones atop the peak had suffered severe damage, and Julie's filthy blood had dissipated somewhat.
The indescribable monster no longer had Mirror Substitution, its surface charred and tattered.
Albus reappeared, his iron-black eyes lifting his right hand to push

forward.
A spiraling storm of white-blue Fire Ravens flocked relentlessly toward the monster's exposed abdomen in overwhelming numbers.
Rumble!
Its weak point battered, the staggering monster collapsed into fragments.
Seeing this, Lumian instantly drew a straight sword resembling the Sword of Courage and teleported to the peak, while Celeste also raced toward it.

Chapter 837: Each With Their Own Schemes

Lumian did not directly teleport behind Albus Medici, nor did he approach the fragmented corpse of the monster Guei. Instead, his figure quickly materialized at the edge of the peak area.

Earlier, while observing the battle from the mountain's base, he had already stopped the knowledge recitation from the brass talisman made by Archbishop Heraberg and removed the corresponding earplugs, placing them in the Traveler's Bag. This was out of concern that the upcoming intense battle might cause devastating damage to them.

Similarly, he wore the Mirror Cufflink on his cuff, preparing to use it.

As soon as Lumian appeared at the mountain peak, he saw the pus flowing from Guei's corpse fragments seep into the bodies and bones forming the ground, igniting nearly invisible and colorless flames.

Those flames instantly engulfed Guei's dismembered body, burning it to ashes, giving no chance for it to writhe and grow.

At the same time, Lumian noticed that the almost invisible remnant flames that had existed at the peak had mostly extinguished, with the remaining ones about to burn out completely.

He had also noticed earlier from the mountain base that the scattered remnant flames on the wasteland were successively extinguishing.

Of course, this did not affect the illumination of the corpse mountain and its surrounding areas. Light came from the purple fiery glow seeping through the massive vortex high in the sky, from the corpses, bones, and different parts of the wasteland ignited during the battle between Albus Medici, Celeste, and the monster Guei, and from the charred banner that was shaking and vibrating with increasing frequency.

The original remnant flames are extinguishing? Were they not always present, but rather created by 0-01 in response to the appearance of Hand Bro, a being with godhood? As this thought struck Lumian, he gripped the ordinary straight sword resembling the Sword of Courage with both hands and ran towards Albus Medici, who was about a dozen meters away.

With a whoosh, the straight sword burst into blazing-white flames.

Albus, with his brow mark vivid and seemingly about to drip, bent down, letting his hands touch the corpses and bones forming the mountain.

The flesh of some corpses suddenly melted, becoming viscous, while bones rapidly gathered.
Albus then straightened up, forcibly pulling from the corpse-and-bone ground a huge white sword temporarily formed from countless spines and neck bones, with melted viscous flesh entwined around it, bringing a bloody and bizarre appearance.
Albus dragged this bizarrely shaped, horrifying giant sword to meet Lumian.
Crack! The giant sword of bones protruding through waxy flesh split Lumian's blazing white flame sword in two with a single strike.
Lumian's figure vanished, rapidly reappearing behind Albus.
He swiftly drew another iron-black straight sword resembling the Sword of Courage from the Traveler's Bag and struck heavily at the neck of this Medici family member before him.
Albus swiftly turned, swinging his monstrous giant sword horizontally, once again shattering Lumian's weapon.
Lumian teleported once more, again flashing behind his enemy.
But as soon as his figure began to materialize, sharp icy spears condensed in mid-air, raining down like a storm.
Celeste, who had concealed herself and circled to an unknown location, launched an area attack targeting both Albus and Lumian.
Lumian then saw dense fog.
It surged out from around Albus, instantly enveloping the area, reducing visibility to ten meters and preventing Lumian from sensing spirit world coordinates beyond the fog, making it difficult to directly teleport out.
Fog of War!
Immediately after, Albus, now out of Lumian and Celeste's sight, pressed a layered, compressed, yet still massive blue fireball towards the ground of the corpse mountain.
Boom!
A terrifying explosion that temporarily deafened swept across the area, dispersing the dense Fog of War, vaporizing the falling icy spears, destroying part of the corpses and bones, and igniting others.
Almost simultaneously, Lumian's figure was reflected in the black breastplate of a corpse on the wasteland.
Earlier, when his teleportation was restricted, he had immediately taken out a mirror from the Traveler's Bag and activated the Mirror Cufflink on his left cuff.
Using this Beyonder item, Lumian had entered the mirror world just before Albus created the indiscriminate explosion and the

dense icy spears fell, escaping from the peak of the corpse mountain.
This was similar to his choice when escaping from Albus and Gusain's encirclement in that underground cavern filled with the fog of war.
Lumian jumped out of the smooth black metal breastplate, and the glass-like ornament on his cuff instantly turned grayish-white, crumbling into dust that scattered to the ground.
The Mirror Cufflink had been used for the last time.
At the peak of the corpse mountain, Albus had already turned and was rushing towards the increasingly violently shaking 0-01.
At this point, Julie's pool of filthy blood was only about a meter away from the surface of the charred banner.
Since Albus's battle with the monster Guei began, the blood no longer felt as if it was being held up by an invisible hand and continued to fall, albeit at an increasingly slower pace.
Seeing 0-01 within reach, a mirror of ice and snow, two to three people tall, suddenly rose in front of Albus.
The mirror instantly reflected Albus's figure.
Similar ice mirrors abruptly appeared to Albus's sides and behind him, reflecting different angles of this Red Angel descendant.
As these giant ice mirrors formed, thick, snake-like strands of blackened hair emerged from the edge of the mountain, carrying the quiet and eerie Demoness's black flames, rapidly extending towards those mirrors.
Celeste intended to curse Albus with this!
Albus swiftly turned sideways, facing the source of those snake-like black hairs, and saw Celeste, cloaked in a black robe with an oddly flushed face.
Boom!
Multiple blazing white, blue-tinged fireballs quickly condensed, shattering those four huge ice mirrors into pieces. However, these fragments melted slowly, continuing to reflect Albus's image from different angles, densely awaiting the arrival of the snake-like hairs carrying the Demoness's flames.
Holding the bizarre giant sword, Albus suddenly transformed into a blazing white, blue-tinged fire person, expanding to three to four meters tall.
This brought continuous high temperatures, completely melting those ice mirror fragments.
Silently, Celeste withdrew those long hairs covered in black flames, once again concealing her form, moving to an unknown location.
Lumian teleported over.

This time, he drew the iron-black Sword of Courage from the Traveler's Bag-the true Sword of Courage!
Enduring the continuous burning pain of sulfurous flames, Lumian was instantly filled with courage.
What's there to fear from just a Sequence 5 who can borrow some power from the Red Angel?
Why hide?
Lumian swung the Sword of Courage at Albus Medici, only igniting the godhood-possessing straight sword with blazing white, blue-tinged flames just before it was about to clash with Albus's bizarre bone and flesh sword.
Having courage didn't mean not using schemes and tricks!
Albus's now iron-black eyes showed no surprise; instead, a smile curled at the corners of his mouth.
His bizarre bone and flesh sword suddenly burst into near-blue flames.
You've been pretending to be weak all along, only using ordinary straight swords. How could I not be prepared for you to suddenly use a godhood-possessing attack?
Albus's body abruptly metallized, instantly boosting his strength to its peak.
Boom!
The two swords collided, creating a sound like an exploding shell.
The blast of wind failed to shake Albus, whose skin now had an iron-black tinge, pushing Lumian and his Sword of Courage back.
Suddenly, Lumian melted into a viscous black liquid that seemed to be formed from the most sinister desires deep within the human heart.
He disintegrated on the ground, rapidly flowing to the bottom of Albus's feet, covering him like a shadow.
Crack! The illusory, viscous, chilling black liquid suddenly dispersed, and a mirror tinged with silvery-black fell onto the corpses and bones, shattering into pieces.
Mirror Substitution? Lumian was shocked.
Albus has Mirror Substitution too?
No, he hadn't used it in several dangerous situations before!
Albus's figure emerged from a mirror near the peak of the corpse mountain, smiling as he transformed into a blazing-white, blue-tinged flame spear, flying back to the battlefield-that mirror was a remnant of Celeste's Mirror Maze.
He didn't have Mirror Substitution, but he could still traverse the mirror world using the crystal necklace coiled around his wrist. During Lumian's first attack, he had prepared a mirror in advance, hiding it at his waist under his tattered jacket.

The indescribable monster appeared so abruptly and strangely, pursuing you. *How could I not be prepared for you in this aspect?*
As for how to quickly escape combat without Mirror Substitution and avoid being affected, you've demonstrated it twice already!
Seeing the flame spear flying towards him, Lumian, still in his viscous black liquid state, immediately seeped into the gaps between the corpses and bones, using this to leave the mountain peak.
Filled with courage, he didn't intend to flee. To avoid being trapped by the Fog of War again without the Mirror Cufflink, he planned to circle around to the other side, seeking new opportunities to corrupt Albus Medici.
Fleeing was definitely not an option!
At this moment, Lumian suddenly felt a rather intense weakness.
Has my spirituality dried up prematurely? No, it's not just a matter of spirituality... Lumian thought as he reverted to human form and released his accumulated spirituality.
Clang!
His right hand inexplicably lost strength, making it difficult to hold onto the Sword of Courage. He could only watch helplessly as the iron-black straight sword fell to the ground, clanging against a stark white skeleton.
Why didn't I teleport to create distance first?
I... I seem to be sick...
Lumian was suddenly alarmed and immediately activated the black mark on his right shoulder, disappearing from near the peak of the corpse mountain.
He left the Sword of Courage there, not retrieving it for the moment.
He was hoping the opponent would trigger one of its negative effects- in about ten minutes, if the Sword of Courage wasn't sealed away, it would indiscriminately attack nearby people.
And now, the people around the Sword of Courage were Albus Medici and Celeste.
As soon as Lumian's figure materialized on the wasteland, Albus at the peak of the corpse mountain slightly furrowed his brow.
This descendant of the Red Angel swayed slightly, noticeably weaker than before.
He seemed to have fallen ill as well.

Chapter 838: Bluffing

Albus's right hand holding the weapon drooped down, seemingly too weak to bear the weight of the bone and flesh sword. He planted it on the ground made of corpses and bones, but compared to Lumian directly dropping the Sword of Courage, he was clearly much better off.

At the same time, Celeste's voice, filled with anticipation and cruel amusement, emanated from various mirrors and mirror-like objects scattered across the corpse mountain and wasteland, "How are you feeling? Confused about when you got infected with the plague?"

Sure enough, it's a Demoness's Plague... Standing on the wasteland, Lumian took advantage of the moment before his muscles completely lost strength, when he could still lift light objects, to quickly remove the Devil's Whispers bone ring from his finger and stuff it back into the Traveler's Bag.

Wearing this ring would cause Lumian to be constantly burned by sulfurous flames, inside and out, continuously weakening his resistance and tolerance to Plague. Although he was already poisoned by sulfur and had some degree of burns, stopping the damage in time was still very important.

After putting away the Devil's Whispers bone ring, Lumian took out the brass talisman and matching earplugs given by Archbishop Heraberg, gripping one in his left palm and putting the other back into his left ear.

"Listen!" Lumian again uttered this ancient Hermes word, continuing his learning process.

Meanwhile, Celeste's voice continued to emanate from various mirror surfaces and mirror-like objects: "We were certain that the operation targeting 0-01 would face interference and competition from Beyonders of the Hunter pathway, and we would inevitably have to confront Wanak. So, we prepared a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact in advance. The mystical pathogen it produces has a very notable characteristic-it can survive in high-temperature flames for a period of time.

"And I can use the power of the special mirror world to let those pathogens spread quietly through different mirror surfaces, silently dispersing throughout this wasteland and corpse mountain.

"You've been setting fires all along, but I've also been continuously releasing frost, pretending to attack and curse. This actually freezes those mystical pathogens inside, allowing them to survive longer in high temperatures. Combined with their own special

nature, it's enough for you to be contaminated partially, slowly seeping into your bodies..."
Celeste explained in great detail, as if wanting to bring pain and savor despair.
This might be her hobby, or perhaps a negative influence brought by certain items.
Albus Medici, leaning on that bone and flesh sword, kept turning his body, looking in different directions, seemingly trying to quickly pinpoint Celeste's true form and drag her out of the mirror world.
However, it was impossible to discern which mirror Celeste was in just from the source of the sound. She might have been constantly moving through the mirror world without stopping.
Similarly, even if Albus recited those three passages of the honorific name again, he could only affect the special mirror world in this area at the peak of the corpse mountain. He couldn't damage the "mirrors" in the middle and lower parts of the corpse mountain and on the wasteland.
Celeste's voice gradually became shrill, both painful and pleasurable.
"This pathogen also has flaws. It's not the type that will have fatal effects in a short time. It can only make you quickly lose your physical strength, accelerate the dissipation of spirituality, and eventually make you lie on the ground, unable to move, desperately listening to your own heart gradually weakening and stop beating."
Hearing this, Lumian teleported to change his position, avoiding being assassinated by Celeste taking advantage of the situation.
Some thoughts flashed through his mind: Could I wear the Eggers family's golden mask to counteract the damage from this mystical pathogen?
If I stop my heart from beating in advance, I won't have to worry about it losing strength!
No, this mystical pathogen seems to affect the Spirit Body as well. Perhaps, after physical death, the Spirit Body will gradually lose the power to maintain its own existence...
Moreover, Archbishop Heraberg said that becoming a deceased here would only lead to eternal slumber... Well, perhaps in the future, one might be 'awakened' as a puppet of 0-01...
Albus Medici at the peak of the corpse mountain suddenly laughed. "So that's how it is. I do feel weakened.
"Even with my ancestor helping me share the impact, in three or four minutes I should completely lose my fighting ability, barely able to crawl.

"But I don't remember if I told you what I was going to do in the underground mausoleum, or if you noticed that the abnormality had already occurred?"
As he spoke, Albus's smile gradually brightened.
His demeanor was composed, appearing very confident and assured, not panicked at all.
Celeste, who had been emitting sounds from different mirrors and mirror-like objects to delay time until the effects of the mystical pathogen deepened, suddenly fell silent.
She seemed to be observing her surroundings, trying to find the abnormality Albus mentioned.
Albus moved his neck and said with an upturned corner of his mouth,
"I only have three things to accomplish here:
"First is to kill Wanak, so that 0-01 no longer has a proxy of this level;
"Second is to recite my ancestor's honorific names around 0-01, causing it to resonate and gradually awaken;
"Third, heh heh, is to delay time, waiting for 0-01 to break free from this corpse mountain on its own.
"Haven't you noticed that the frequency and amplitude of 0-01's trembling and shaking are getting higher and larger?
"Haven't you noticed that 0-01 is about to break free from the corpse mountain?"
Wh- Celeste, hidden near the peak of the corpse mountain, concealed in one of the components of the previous Mirror Maze to closely observe Albus's movements and ready to interfere with the target's self-rescue at any time, tensed up and instinctively looked towards the violently shaking and trembling 0-01.
She then saw that charred banner with the dangerous blood spots densely covering it.
Her head suddenly buzzed, and her neck ached.
She was further corrupted!
Crack!
The mirror where Celeste was hiding instantly shattered, revealing her figure, with a blank expression, her head trying to separate from her neck.
Now! Albus seized the opportunity, discarding the heavy bone and flesh sword, transforming into a blazing white, blue-tinged flame spear, swooshing down near Celeste.
Then, he created a dense Fog of War, enveloping Celeste and the area within about ten meters around this Demoness.
After completing this, Albus didn't give Celeste a chance to break free from her corrupted state and escape the Fog of War through

the mirror world. Mustering his remaining strength, he condensed several blue fireballs and sent them crashing into the Fog of War one after another.
Rumble!
Relatively violent explosions occurred, and pale blue flames rose up. Celeste's Mirror Substitution was passively triggered.
But affected and misled by the Fog of War, her figure reappeared still within the blast range, still covered by shock waves powerful enough to destroy a Demoness's body.
Albus controlled the power of the fireballs, ensuring the Fog of War was never dispersed, causing Celeste's Mirror Substitutions to shatter one after another.
Similarly, he also controlled the frequency of fireballs bombarding that small area of fog, not giving Celeste even a slight chance to recover and enter the mirror world.
Finally, Celeste's shadow froze. That beautiful and seductive body blackened and disintegrated, falling to the ground in the form of corpse fragments.
Plop, the black teardrop-shaped ornament she had been wearing on her brow fell onto a corpse.
Albus stopped maintaining the Fog of War and looked at the dead Celeste, laughing mockingly.
"Oh, I forgot to tell you, my calmness just now was feigned. I needed to delay for five to six minutes to wait for 0-01 to resonate with my ancestor to the extreme, initially awaken, and break free from the constraints of the corpse mountain.
"Why were you in such a hurry? So hurried that you forgot direct eye contact with 0-01 would lead to corruption, and you were already corrupted to some extent.
"Remember, being too hasty or too slow are both major taboos in war."
While mocking the dead, Albus didn't go to pick up that black teardrop-shaped ornament which clearly possessed Beyonder power, fearing it might trigger corresponding negative effects and impact subsequent matters, especially since he was already considerably weakened.
At this point, his hands and feet had become powerless, running had become difficult, so he could only transform again into a blazing white, blue-tinged flame spear, flying back near 0-01.
He glanced at Julie's filthy blood slowly falling in mid-air, estimating it was only about 30-40 centimeters away from the target.
Albus then threw a blue fireball at it, burning that pool of filthy blood, causing it to slowly evaporate and dissipate without

triggering any additional changes.
After closing his eyes to sense the frequency and amplitude of 0-01's shaking and trembling, Albus silently said to himself, It seems to be progressing faster than expected, two or three more minutes should be enough.
Heh heh, Celeste, I lied about one thing earlier. In the end, 0-01 still can't break free on its own, it needs me to help it with Medici family blood...
I didn't mock your corpse earlier because I had too much time, some words needed to be heard by Lumian Lee, to make him overlook the part where I lied...
Albus Medici then turned to look at the wasteland, at Lumian who had just completed a teleportation to change his position to avoid being locked onto, and said loudly with a laugh, "You're very alert. In such a pressing situation, you actually didn't follow that fool Celeste to observe the abnormalities of 0-01."
Lumian raised his hand to scratch his right ear, telling a lie that couldn't be more obvious, "Sorry, I was learning, I didn't hear your conversation just now. Alright, I admit, I was thinking Celeste would help me confirm the current situation of 0-01."
Albus looked at this guy and said thoughtfully, "You're very calm. Your physical combat ability should be almost depleted by now. As for me, with my ancestor sharing the burden, I can definitely hold out longer than you."
Lumian laughed, laughing with composure and confidence, exuding the brilliance of atop student. "Haven't you noticed that there are other abnormalities here?"

Chapter 839: The "Hidden" Taboo

Other abnormalities? Albus's first reaction was that Lumian was imitating him, trying to trick him into looking at something he shouldn't.

He cautiously scanned the wasteland below the corpse mountain, only seeing undead soldiers fallen in different places and nearly extinguished colorless embers.

During this process, Albus also listened for any movements around him, but apart from the increasingly violent trembling and shaking of 0-01, he received no other information.

"Are you trying to delay time this way? I think this is more advantageous for me," Albus replied to Lumian with a smile.

The image of this competitor was reflected in his iron-black eyes as he quickly estimated the probability of launching a successful surprise attack in his mind.

He wanted to eliminate the last hidden danger before losing his close combat ability.

Lumian didn't give Albus this opportunity. Although his arms had weakened to the point where he could only pick up relatively light objects, and his legs were so weak he could barely walk, the accumulated spirituality he released was still quite abundant, enough to support him in completing many teleportations.

His figure disappeared from Albus's sight, then reappeared on the side of the corpse mountain.

Before Albus could find him, Lumian said with a smile, "It's understandable that you didn't notice other abnormalities here. After all, you don't seem to be someone who enjoys studying. And your ancestor, that Red Angel, although having a very thorough understanding of 0-01, the current 0-01 is no longer the same as before.

"From the Sealed Artifact information, I know that after your ancestor was killed by the Blood Emperor, 0-01 changed hands twice-once to Alista Tudor, and once to Death from the Southern Continent. Therefore, it has been corrupted by other, equally high-level corruptions."

Seeing Albus's gaze turn towards him, seemingly listening and discerning the truth of his words without immediate intention to launch an attack, Lumian stayed in place and continued, "Of course, your ancestor visited Fourth Epoch Trier and understood the various details of the corresponding seal. Morora's seal was modeled after Trier's, so you definitely wouldn't lack understanding of the situation here. But the seals on both sides are only mostly similar, with many details still having critical

differences.
"The book 'Principles of Sealing' tells me that this is because 0-01 and its corruption are purer compared to Fourth Epoch Trier; it's less complex, can form fewer balances and constraints, and many characteristic issues are more prominent.
"If your ancestor were to come in person, take a turn in the underground mausoleum, no, just take a few glances, He would definitely understand what abnormality I'm talking about. But unfortunately, He can't descend to Morora, and probably can't see or hear directly through the seal using your eyes and ears. He can only give you power, help you share the damage, and listen to your reports periodically.
"Under these circumstances, heh heh, it's indeed understandable that you didn't notice other abnormalities here."
Albus Medici stared down at Lumian, listening to his narrative with a smile on his face, while pondering where the problem actually lay.
Rambling on and on about irrelevant things, it does seem like he's trying to buy time.
But buying time is more beneficial to me... The resonance between 0-01 and my ancestor is getting stronger and stronger. In two or three more minutes, I'll be able to approach and drip some Medici family blood...
His condition will only deteriorate faster than mine, the longer we delay, the weaker he'll become...
Is he waiting for reinforcements? But unless the Archbishop of the Church of Knowledge personally intervenes, there should be no one in Morora who can participate in this struggle, and those outside Morora can't come in... The Church of Knowledge currently appears quite neutral, at most with a slight inclination in secret, they won't directly get involved. Hehe, I need to be vigilant about this point, so-called scholars are more treacherous than us Hunters, the more knowledge they have, the more treacherous they become...
It's a pity, this trash can is very alert, he'll teleport away at the slightest sign of trouble, while I need to get close to release the Fog of War... No wonder my ancestor said that before Alista Tudor became a god, he found Bethel Abraham more troublesome...
Continuously feinting attacks, forcing him to use teleport repeatedly, draining his Spirituality? That's one way. If we really go on according to his pace, by the time his spirituality is insufficient to support teleport, I'll also be almost unable to complete the battle, even standing will be difficult, only able to rely on Fire Ravens-scatter shots-like a blind man shooting birds...

But if feints are to be convincing, they need to consume a lot of spirituality, and if they're not convincing, they can't bluff anyone...
Why does this dog shit-like pathogen target the physical body first, then affect the Spirit Body? If the rate of spirituality dissipation could be as fast as the loss of muscle strength, the problem would be simple. In that case, I wouldn't need to hold out for too long, just longer than this trash can.
As Albus's thoughts raced, Lumian smiled and said, "Do you need me to give you a hint?
"I don't know if you've seen the sealing information for 0-01, but you must be very familiar with the various taboos here. Haven't you noticed that two sections of the content, or rather, two of the taboos, hide problems?"
Two taboos hiding problems? Albus suddenly had a dangerous intuition, he began to believe that some of what Lumian said might be true.
Lumian said with a mocking tone, "Haven't figured it out yet? See, this is the consequence of not studying. I didn't notice it at first either, but after reading a large amount of related books and materials in Morora, I gradually developed doubts.
"Let me give you another hint. The first problematic taboo is that experimental subjects must cover their eyes and carry a lamp, and if the lamp goes out, that experimental personnel will directly disappear, and everyone who knows him will simultaneously believe that he died long ago."
"What's wrong with that? I've already had people verify the authenticity of this taboo. Hehe, it's only because there are many light sources here, otherwise we would have all disappeared by now," Albus quickly thought about the details he might have overlooked.
At this moment, Lumian's figure suddenly disappeared.
He teleported to change his position, appearing near the top of the corpse mountain, next to the Sword of Courage.
Taking advantage of the fact that he could still move the Traveler's Bag, he crouched down and slipped the bag he had been holding in advance over the Sword of Courage, returning it to its companions.
At this time, Albus, not expecting Lumian to appear so close to the top of the corpse mountain, was still searching for the target with his gaze across the wasteland.
By the time he reacted and condensed blue fireballs to bombard downwards, Lumian had already activated the black mark on his right shoulder and truly teleported to somewhere in the wasteland.
He risked picking up the Sword of Courage because he now realized

that he might be the one facing its indiscriminate attacks later.
As the rumbling explosions just began to subside, Lumian's voice sounded again:
"Haven't you figured it out yet?
"After I arrived at the real corpse mountain, I actually doubted my guess and completely abandoned it, but the later results made me more certain, and allowed me to figure out more problems along the way."
Lumian spoke to Albus Medici from afar in the tone of a teacher, "The answer is, why must it be experimental subjects carrying lit lamps to enter, why not place burning wall lamps at intervals inside the underground mausoleum and replace the lamp oil regularly? Although this would consume more resources, it would be more convenient and safer. The Church of Knowledge's financial power couldn't possibly be unable to support such an arrangement.
"Is it to make the seal seem mysterious and terrifying? Obviously not, there are clearly deeper reasons."
Albus Medici's eyes flickered slightly, vaguely having some guesses.
He cast his gaze towards the embers scattered across the corpse mountain.
Lumian's figure disappeared again, appearing among Celeste's corpse fragments.
He then inverted the Traveler's Bag over the black teardrop-shaped forehead ornament, collecting it.
This time, Albus tracked Lumian's figure in time, but he didn't make a move, nor did he transform into a flame spear to throw himself over.
This was firstly because the other could teleport away at any time, and secondly because what Lumian was doing now was also beneficial to him.
Albus was almost certain that the forehead ornament was the "source" of the current mystical pathogen. After placing it in another space, the concentration of pathogens here would gradually decrease, preventing their conditions from rapidly deteriorating, allowing them to hold out longer.
After putting away the forehead ornament, Lumian immediately teleported to the wasteland on the other side of the corpse mountain, smiling at Albus.
"The second problematic taboo is 'Beyonders with strength surpassing Sequence 5 are forbidden from approaching. Warning, Beyonders with strength surpassing Sequence 5 are forbidden from approaching.'"

Albus immediately understood Lumian's line of thought and asked in a deep voice, "You mean there's no need to specifically emphasize that Beyonders above Sequence 5 cannot approach?
"Indeed, in reality, as long as they're not already corrupted experimental subjects or special people like us, whether they're above Sequence 5 or not, they shouldn't approach 0-01."
Lumian wanted to applaud, but even adjusting the Traveler's Bag was quite strenuous for him now.
He said with a tone that approved his educatability, "Yes, so why specifically emphasize that Beyonders above Sequence 5 cannot approach?
"Probably because when Beyonders above Sequence 5 approach 0-01, besides bringing danger to themselves, it would also trigger additional, more terrifying abnormalities. Therefore, it must be specially warned!
"Just now, the appearance of Hand Bro brought about an attack from 0-01, leaving embers all over this wasteland and corpse mountain. And from my observation, these embers will extinguish on their own.
"What does this indicate? It indicates that before we came in, this place was in darkness, without any firelight.
"Combining this with the first problematic taboo I mentioned, and with what the book 'Principles of Sealing' says about self-balance and self-sealing, the potential hidden danger becomes very clear."
Albus's expression changed slightly, obviously realizing what the possible abnormality might be.
Lumian once again changed his position using teleportation and continued, "That hidden danger is that there's a latent taboo:
"The underground mausoleum needs eternal, deathly darkness. It can occasionally have light, but there can't be continuous light in the same place. And when Beyonders above Sequence 5 with godhood approach, it instinctively causes 0-01 to burn this area, bringing embers that can last for a period of time."
At this point, Lumian's smile grew even brighter.
"Now, the embers have been burning for a while, and you're still continuously creating firelight.
"I'm very curious about what will happen next."
What will happen? Albus Medici's gaze instantly froze, his back suddenly tensing.
He knew where the problem lay now!
The frequency and amplitude of 0-01's trembling and shaking were more violent than he had anticipated, progressing faster!
At this moment, the entire sky suddenly took on the color of burning.

Chapter 840: The Importance of Knowledge

Inside Morora.

Two exiles who were dueling suddenly dropped their swords and clutched their necks with their hands.

Blood seeped through their fingers.

Nearby onlookers and pedestrians also experienced a stuttering effect, as if their heads were being grabbed by invisible hands and forcefully pulled upwards, causing the muscles in their necks to gradually tear.

In the endless graveyard near the Knowledge Cathedral, all the trees suddenly burst into bright red flames. The soil in the corresponding graves writhed as if something was trying to crawl out.

More and more clouds gathered in the sky, taking on the color of burning fire.

At the top of the corpse mountain.

Albus Medici's neck also stung with pain. He raised his hand with great difficulty and weakness, trying to press down on it.

He already understood what was happening. He didn't hastily turn his head to look directly at 0-01, as that would not only result in considerable corruption, but could also break his neck, causing his head to detach!

Albus slowly turned his body to face 0-01, but closed his eyes.

At the same time, he heard rustling and clanging sounds from the wasteland.

Lumian saw those undead soldiers in iron-black full body armor standing up one after another, the dark red or pale flames in their eye sockets clearly flickering.

The huge cloud vortex in the sky tinged with purple firelight was being torn apart and smoothed by an invisible force.

The abnormality had finally manifested.

Albus didn't hesitate. He immediately let his skin take on an iron-black hue, his entire body seeming to transform into a metal-cast puppet.

Keeping his eyes tightly shut, he approached 0-01 step by step.

During this process, his neck was noticeably stretched, causing the iron membrane that made up his skin to be torn into countless tiny metal threads.

Deep, chilling cut marks appeared on his iron-black flesh and bones, with bright red blood visibly oozing out.

In just a few seconds, Albus Medici walked to 0-01's side. He released his right palm that had been weakly pressing on his neck, letting it extend towards the charred flag, carrying his own blood.

As a fellow Hunter, Albus also had very strong spatial perception and positioning abilities. Moreover, 0-01's flag was violently shaking, fluttering loudly, with sounds entering Albus's ears, making it easy for him to determine the target's location.
Of course, if he directly touched 0-01's main body, the corruption would truly occur. This couldn't be avoided just by not looking. But Albus now had no other choice.
Just as he reached out towards that charred flag, Albus heard a "snap" sound- the sound of the iron skin on his metal neck being completely torn apart.
He immediately changed his form, transforming from an iron-black metal-cast puppet into a blue human-shaped flame.
This caused the blood on his palm to evaporate rapidly.
While guarding against a sudden attack from Lumian, Albus quickened his movements, continuously flicking the mostly evaporated bright red blood towards the front.
On the wasteland, Lumian was mingling among the undead soldiers, his palm both scorching hot and ice-cold.
He didn't dare to look towards 0-01, so he naturally didn't know Albus's current actions, but he could roughly guess that the other was making a final gamble.
It's useless, the situation has already spiraled out of your control... Lumian muttered, not moving to stop him.
He was more worried that if he really teleported next to Salinger's Blood Banner to stop Albus Medici from dripping blood on it, he might step into a trap set by the other.
Given the current situation, Albus could completely change his approach-since he couldn't achieve his intended goal, he might as well eliminate all competitors, making his side the more advantageous camp, and then use this to reorganize.
So, Albus was likely pretending to drip Medici family blood onto 0-01's flag, but actually trying to lure Lumian to stop him, thus seizing the opportunity to kill the last competitor.
At the top of the corpse mountain, the human-shaped flame that Albus had transformed into was severely stretched, with the upper and lower parts seeming about to separate.
At the same time, the flaming light he emitted dimmed considerably, like ordinary flames doused with a bucket of ice-cold fresh blood.
Plop, Albus heard the tiny sound of liquid hitting the flag.
After thousands of years, the Medici family's blood finally fell on 0-01's charred flag again.
However, there was no additional change.
This was also within Albus's expectations, after all, the degree of

resonance had not yet reached its limit, and 0-01's awakening situation had significantly exceeded any threshold.
Albus's desperate attempt to leave blood on the charred flag was more about reserving a chess piece for the future, making some preparations.
The next second, Albus, existing in the form of a human-shaped flame, felt an intense pain between his eyebrows.
Some strange force extended from 0-01, seeming to want to assimilate him, turning him into its own flame.
Albus suddenly turned around, opened his eyes, and looked towards the wasteland.
He wanted to kill Lumian before being absorbed by 0-01, eliminating the last competitor!
That trash can actually managed to stay calm and didn't come to stop me from smearing blood on 0-01's surface... Amidst Albus's regret, Lumian's figure was "reflected" in his flaming eyes.
Lumian smiled at him, activated the black mark on his right shoulder, and disappeared from his spot.
Albus didn't hide his disappointment and regret, reverting to his human form.
His neck was already torn open, revealing white bones and blackened blood vessels.
He then activated the crystal necklace wrapped around his wrist, causing it to explode directly.
Bang bang bang, the consecutively exploding crystals formed a deep vortex in front of Albus, with a deep, dark world covered by a glass-like barrier at the bottom of the vortex-that special mirror world.
Under extremely urgent circumstances and unable to directly leave Morora, Albus Medici chose to jump into the dark vortex in front of him, falling towards that special mirror world.
At this moment, his neck was about to break, with his cervical vertebrae exposed.
He fell into that special mirror world, disappearing into the deep darkness.
The dark vortex next to 0-01 was immediately ignited by invisible, colorless flames and dissipated completely.
In midair, the blue flame that had lost Albus's maintenance quickly extinguished, with the remaining tiny bit of Julie's filthy blood continuing to fall, touching the charred flag.
All over Morora.
Nearly ten thousand heads dragging white, blood-stained spines flew in the sky, while their headless bodies ran wildly through the streets.

In the graveyard, countless skeletons crawled out from underground, with dark red or pale flames burning in their eye sockets.
Red "rainwater" that could ignite buildings and humans began to fall from the sky.
Inside the Knowledge Cathedral, Archbishop Heraberg of Morora, wearing a plain white robe trimmed with brass wire, stood in front of the open stained glass window, feeling the walls faintly showing signs of melting.
He sighed lightly and raised his palm.
...
In the underground mausoleum, on that anomalous wasteland.
Lumian teleported to the side of the corpse mountain.
Just as he was about to sit down against the corpses and skeletons, his legs already unable to support his body weight, he was suddenly pulled by an invisible force, slowly standing up again and walking towards the group of undead soldiers.
This required no effort from him-he had no strength to use anyway.
Lumian didn't resist or struggle, as if only his self-consciousness still belonged to him.
The burning pain and icy rotting sensation in his right palm kept him basically alert.
As long as my head isn't torn off my neck, everything else is fine...
Lumian muttered to himself while listening to the knowledge narrated by the brass talisman, continuing to walk towards the gathering troops in the wasteland as 0-01's puppet with the help of the external force.
The current situation was basically consistent with his expectations.
If he had read even a little less earlier, his head and body would have already gone separate ways by now.
Knowledge is power, knowledge is wealth!
After about ten seconds, the sky suddenly dimmed, and darkness surged back into this area.
0-01 seemed to be gripped by an invisible hand, with its trembling and shaking starting to calm down.
The flames in this area extinguished one after another, and the deathly silent, cold darkness once again ruled this place.
The Church of Knowledge has finally suppressed 0-01's disturbance. If it kept up a while longer, I'd really have become a puppet... Lumian secretly breathed a sigh of relief, feeling the darkness invade his body like an invisible, eerie, cold flow of water.

The Underworld Daoist mark on his right palm emitted an even stronger sense of decay than before, helping him resist this invasion.
Lumian teleported back to the position he had chosen earlier, weakly sitting down against the corpses and skeletons that made up the mountain.
He closed his eyes, focusing on listening to the knowledge transmitted from his ear plugs in this lightless, pure darkness.
...
In Trier, on the sacrificial square at the entrance of the third level of the underground catacombs.
After answering Jenna's question, that blurry and holy female figure disappeared from Jenna's sight, as if it was just part of an illusion.
Jenna shook her head, her gaze returning to reality, seeing Franca's concerned face.
"D-during my advancement, I seemed to sense Lady Krismona again, and even had a few words of dialogue with Her," Jenna carefully told her companion about her recent experience.
Hiss, do Angel-level high-rank beings truly not die? Franca asked curiously, "What did She say?"
Jenna suddenly felt a bit embarrassed. "She said to reconcile with my mirror self, because we are originally one. Sh-She said Her father was... was that 'Blood Emperor'..."
"Huh?" Franca was both shocked and confused, "Why did She tell you this?"
Jenna felt even more embarrassed. "I asked, I asked without thinking..."
"Is it really the 'Blood Emperor'? Then it shouldn't be your hallucination. You couldn't have come up with such an answer even in a hallucination." Franca whispered, gradually getting excited.
"Dammit, what do you mean I couldn't have come up with it even in a hallucination? Well, indeed, who could have thought of that?" Jenna reflexively retorted.
Franca then clapped her hands together.
"That was a good question, a good question indeed! This information is extremely, extremely important!"
Her eyes sparkling, she said, "Lumian previously suspected that the special mirror world was created by the Blood Emperor Alista Tudor to deal with the Primordial Demoness, and the Tamara family might have played a very important role in this matter.
"Now it seems this guess needs to be abandoned. Perhaps that special mirror world was jointly created by the Blood Emperor

Alista Tudor and the Primordial Demoness!
"Otherwise, how could a true god of the Hunter pathway without mirror magic create such a special mirror world?"

Chapter 841: The Brand

Jenna paused before responding, "True."

Initially, they believed the special mirror world was a result of the War of the Four Emperors, created in the aftermath of fierce battles among beings like the Primordial Demoness and the Blood Emperor. However, after Lumian explored the treasury of the Blue Avenger, he uncovered new information suggesting the special mirror world existed before the War of the Four Emperors. He speculated it was a tool crafted by Blood Emperor Alista Tudor to counter the Primordial Demoness and a means for resurrection.

Their greatest confusion at the time was why Alista Tudor, a true god of the Hunter pathway, could create such a uniquely bizarre mirror world. Did high-rank beings of the Apprentice pathway under Him participate?

Franca then remarked wistfully, "According to Lumian's theory and our experience, both Hunters and Demonesses bring calamity. Wouldn't a true god of the Hunter pathway combined with one from the Demoness pathway essentially epitomize the concept of disaster? No wonder Fourth Epoch Trier ended up the way it did...

"However, is it possible for true deities from neighboring pathways to cooperate amicably, instead of immediately succumbing to the urge to converge and battle for dominance?"

Jenna, puzzled by this question, pursed her lips in thought before asking, "Is there a way to control that urge to converge?"

"That's beyond my knowledge for now, at least until I come into contact with the corresponding mystical knowledge after becoming an Angel," Franca self-deprecatingly said, her thoughts wandering. "Perhaps the Primordial Demoness could, but definitely not the Blood Emperor. Given our understanding of the history of the Fourth Epoch, He was a violent, bloodthirsty madman. *How could He control Himself unless someone helped Him?* Who could that be?"

Jenna paused thoughtfully and then said, "The Tamara family..."

"Uh..." Franca's eyes lit up. "Right, the Tamara family at that time was primarily known for the Apprentice pathway. High-rank beings of the Apprentice pathway excel at sealing and controlling space, and could utilize the mirror world to a certain extent. Yes, this explains why the Tamara family was involved in the creation of the special mirror world."

One of the two Special Mirror World Fragments they held came from a tomb of the Tamara family.

Growing more excited, Franca said, "The Tamara family must have been the bridge between the Blood Emperor and the Primordial

Demoness, carrying out a secret mission! And since they had long been exposed to the Demoness Sect, it makes sense that some of their members sided with them after the split.
"And, moreover, since Lady Krismona is a descendant of the Blood Emperor, then Her twin brother, the current Demoness of Gray, probably is too. The Apprentice lineage of the Tamara family has borne many humiliations over the past thousand years, willingly becoming women to continue serving the direct descendants of the Blood Emperor. Such loyalty, such loyalty!"
As she spoke, Franca mockingly wiped away a tear, moved by her own words.
Jenna, long accustomed to her companion's boundless digressions and jokes, raised her own question, "Could a Sequence 2 Apprentice pathway Angel from the Tamara family really seal the Blood Emperor's urge to converge?"
"If the Tamara family can't, what about Mr. Door?" Franca turned serious, pondering. "Lumian said He is the foremost noble of the Tudor Empire, and ranked behind Him, Amon, is a confirmed King of Angels. Then it's likely He is one too. A King of Angels of the Apprentice pathway might be able to temporarily seal the Blood Emperor's urge to converge, right? Was Mr. Door also involved in the matter of the special mirror world?"
"Possibly," Jenna agreed.
The normal mirror world was essentially an embodiment of the concept of "doors."
Franca's thoughts suddenly took a playful turn, chuckling softly. "There's also a possibility that the convergence behavior of the true deities of the Hunter and Demoness pathways differs from other pathways. First, they attract each other, dancing around each other, and only after reaching a certain climax do they start to devour each other, deciding the ultimate victor."
Jenna couldn't help but roll her eyes.
Franca was at it with her crude jokes again.
Of course, for Jenna, who had once frequented bars and dance halls in the market district, living as a Showy Diva for a long period, such coarse humor was hardly adult-only material.
Franca then composed herself. "I can now truly understand what the Demoness of Black meant. No wonder she asked me why I thought the Demoness Sect didn't control the special mirror world. She said it had been under the Primordial One's control until the end of the War of the Four Emperors.
"But she also believed that the special mirror world was initially created to combat the Primordial One, only later controlled by Her. Is she unaware of the secrets of those times and the Demoness of

Gray's lineage, or is she just deceiving me, trying to mislead me? Or, did the Blood Emperor indeed initially want to combat the Primordial One, but She then took control of the nascent special mirror world, leading to Their cooperation?
"Or, was their cooperation aimed at combating something else?
"Ah, what was their purpose in creating such a special mirror world?"
Jenna shook her head honestly. "I don't know."
Franca thoughtfully stroked her ponytail.
"The Demoness of Black is both a descendant of the Primordial One and has the Tamara family's bloodline. She probably knows more about the special mirror world than I imagined."
Jenna hummed in response, rubbing her temples. "Either way, we need to report this information quickly."
Franca glanced at Jenna and cleared her throat. "You also need to go back and rest, adapting to the changes the potion has made to your body."
...
At the foot of the corpse mountain, Lumian sat with his eyes closed, his back against the piles of bodies and skeletons, intently listening to the monotonous voice emanating from the brass earplugs.
He was completing his studies.
He no longer needed to listen to all the remaining books; mastering this one would likely suffice. Yet, even so, it would still take over ten hours.
As time ticked away, Lumian's body grew weaker. Even with the support of the corpses and skeletons, he could no longer sit upright, relying solely on external forces to keep from collapsing.
His spirituality was evaporating faster, rendering him unable to use his teleportation ability anymore.
Fortunately, he had stowed away the artifact left by Celeste and the mystic pathogens had been dissipated completely by 0-01's activation; his condition hadn't worsened to the point where his heart was too weak to beat or his Spirit Body began to disintegrate, allowing him to barely keep at it.
After an indeterminate period, Lumian suddenly felt invigorated, his body regained strength, and his spirituality was replenished.
It was six in the morning based on Cordu time.
His body refreshed and free from illness, Lumian sat up straight and resumed the final part of his study.
Nearly 45 minutes later, he uttered an ancient Hermes word in a deep voice, "Stop!"
He felt he was on the brink of corruption and could not

accumulate any more!
Just as the brass talisman finished transmitting the knowledge, Lumian's mind became hazy.
Vaguely, he "saw" the charred flag dotted with dangerous blood spots, surrounded by dense darkness, gently swaying.
Lumian also "saw" the ground covered in corpses, a vast army marching, the earth soaked in blood, countless severed arms and limbs...
A strong smell of blood and rust pierced his nose, as if coming from himself.
Lumian felt a certain call, not just from the charred flag but also from the dense darkness enveloping it.
The burning heat and icy cold in the palm of his right hand became more distinct.
They originated from the residual aura of the Blood Emperor and the seal left by the Underworld Daoist.
At that moment, Lumian suddenly realized another, deeper purpose of the Aurora Order's arrangement of the Dream Festival: With the Underworld Daoist's seal, I truly share a mystical similarity with 0-01...
0-01 once belonged to Blood Emperor Alista Tudor, then fell under the control of Death and suffered the corruption of the Death pathway's powers, which were also utilized by the Church of Knowledge to seal 0-01 itself. And now, I carry the residual aura of the Blood Emperor and the seal left by the Underworld Daoist, bearing powers of the Death, Evernight, and Warrior pathways...
With these thoughts flashing through his mind, Lumian combined the knowledge he had learned with the behavior of Albus and Julie, and amidst the strange and dangerous summons, he stood up and teleported to the top of the corpse mountain.
He didn't open his eyes. In the deathly silent, icy darkness, he couldn't see anything even if he did.
But as he drew closer, a sharp pain developed between Lumian's eyebrows, and his blood-or something else-seemed to want to burst through his pores and flesh.
Lumian didn't resist, enduring the pain.
Finally, a droplet, resembling blood, tore through his forehead and flew towards where 0-01 was located.
With a plop, the residual aura of the Blood Emperor inside Lumian suddenly boiled over, turning into a raging river of flames that ravaged between his Spirit Body, organs, and flesh.
The icy, rotting sensation in his palm intensified, preventing this river of flame from carrying away all his flesh and breaking the seal.

Lumian soon suffered so intensely he nearly lost consciousness; only when the residual aura of the Blood Emperor gradually subsided did he slowly regain his thoughts.
He let out a long breath and whispered to himself, I should be the proxy for 0-01 now...
If it weren't for the Underworld Daoist seal, I would definitely have become another Wanak, no, not another Wanak, but Blood Emperor Alista Tudor, who would have used my body to return.
Lumian didn't dare to linger near 0-01, afraid that the Sealed Artifact might detect a flaw in its new proxy, a defect with a will of his own that still persisted.
And Lumian knew that with his current status and power, it was impossible to take 0-01 out of Morora; even if the Church of Knowledge agreed to let him do so, it would only lead to his own destruction.
Leaving a mark and becoming a proxy is enough to complete this task.
Unfortunately, 0-01 is tightly sealed, and a proxy's special abilities can only be fully manifested in Morora... Lumian muttered a few words and teleported back to the wasteland.
He immediately sensed a team of undead soldiers and iron puppets patrolling silently in the darkness, seemingly eternal in their movements.
Suddenly, Lumian felt a stir in his heart.
The connection between contractors told him that the leader was the Abscessed Hand!
This mysterious being had regrown bones and flesh after being subjected to the bombardment of divine descent, but it seemed to have been conquered by 0-01, becoming its guard.
Is Hand Bro's unique trait being indestructible? Lumian turned his body, letting the Abscessed Hand and its puppets pass by.
Unexpectedly, the Abscessed Hand stopped in front of Lumian and uttered in a low voice, "Omebella..."

Chapter 842: Departure

"Omebella..."

Hearing the voice of the Abscessed Hand and the name it shouted, a chill ran up Lumian's spine, making his hair stand on end and cold sweat break out.

He didn't know when the Abscessed Hand had regrown bones and flesh from the ashes, returning to its original form, but he was prepared for any abnormalities when it passed by him, given the contract stemming from the Inevitability pathway's powers between them.

Lumian wasn't overly worried; they were "colleagues" now, and the situation shouldn't turn dangerous. What he didn't expect was that the Abscessed Hand would call out "Omebella."

It was like a horror story!

For a moment, Lumian couldn't help but wonder if he had already been subtly eroded by the Great Mother's Child of God, Omebella, to the extent that he was gradually being replaced.

Standing in the pure darkness, the unseen Abscessed Hand paused for a few seconds, then continued moving forward with the group of iron puppets and undead soldiers, marching mechanically.

Only then did Lumian snap back to reality, pondering the reason for what had just happened.

According to Ludwig, some beings created directly by the Great Mother or granted her boon, lacking necessary intelligence, can sense the trace of Omebella's bloodline in me and regard me as the Great Mother's Child of God...

Hand Bro was first revived and interrupted by divine descent, then controlled by 0-01, becoming its puppet. The feminine transformation trend seemed to have stopped, meaning it hasn't fully revived and lost its self-awareness, truly lacking necessary intelligence.

Was it directly created by the Great Mother, or did it receive Her boon? The corruption turning it into a woman and pushing it to the limit of beauty likely originated from the Great Mother...

That does seem plausible. Even a single drop of blood can regrow a complete body, evoking a sense of rebirth...

But something's off. By this logic, the Abscessed Hand should call me an Honorable Child of God and show some subservience. Heh heh, to directly call the Child of God's name is blasphemy!

Lumian grumbled to himself, growing more puzzled.

Also, if Omebella itself is a title, the Abscessed Hand should only know I'm a Child of God, not a specific name. The Great Mother likely has multiple Children ot God, perhaps continuously created.

How could the unwise Hand Bro distinguish who is who and what their name is...
Unless, Omebella is the most special Child of God, or Hand Bro knew Omebella- the Giant Queen-in its previous life?
Lumian raised his right hand, rubbing his chin, thinking he should quickly report this to Madam Magician after leaving and see if they could uncover the Abscessed Hand's original identity. Perhaps the ancient records in the New City of Silver contained some clues.
After a few seconds, Lumian vanished from the spot, teleporting back near the top of the corpse mountain.
Distracted by the Abscessed Hand incident, he remembered he still had spoils to collect.
That was the Beyonder characteristic of the Demoness of Affliction from Celeste, which could later be used by Jenna.
As for Julie's characteristic, after the divine descent and filthy blood incident, Lumian had no idea where it was.
In the deathly silent darkness, Lumian stored the shapeless Demoness of Affliction Beyonder characteristic in his Traveler's Bag.
He even placed two chunks of Celeste's corpse inside.
Maybe they can be used as supplementary ingredients. If not, I can give them to Ludwig. With me as godfather away for so long; I should bring him a gift. But will he consider this dirty... Lumian mumbled and teleported to the edge of the wasteland, leaving the area steeped in deathly darkness.
As 0-01's proxy, he quickly and smoothly exited the underground mausoleum, returning to the entrance area.
Lumian then opened his eyes, seeing the blue sky.
At that moment, the morning sun was bright but not harsh, the air fresh and carrying a slight burnt scent after the rain.
Having spent over ten hours in the eternal darkness of the underground tomb, Lumian felt as if a lifetime had passed.
Then, he saw numerous heads, each trailing a bloodstained, pale spine, hovering in the air.
They were countless, thousands, all staring at the entrance of the tomb, at Lumian.
Among them were faces Lumian recognized, regulars at the Carnivore bar.
The aftermath of 0-01's activation?
There must be thousands, if not tens of thousands...
Is this a form of sacrifice?
Red Priest...
Thoughts flashing through his mind, Lumian raised his hands.

His forehead became hot, with a slight prickling pain.
Ooo!
A violent gale suddenly blew, scattering the thousands of heads with trailing spines back into the city.
The flying heads seemed to sense Lumian's will, drifting with the wind, and landed back on their headless bodies.
So this is the special power of a proxy? Unfortunately, it can only be used in Morora... Lumian lowered his hands, feeling regretful, and walked out of the cemetery.
At the cemetery gate, an exile was twisting his own returned head back in place.
Crack!
His head turned from facing his spine back to the front.
Seeing Lumian watching him, he smiled and spoke normally, "Today's... weather...
is really nice..."
"Yeah," Lumian responded with a relaxed smile.
He teleported directly to the Carnivore bar, appearing at the door of Julie's room.
The corpse of Lez was gone from the bed, along with Julie's collections.
The enforcers have been here... Did they bury Lez's body in the cemetery?
Lumian mused and vanished from the spot.
This time, he appeared at the door of the Knowledge Cathedral.
He walked inside, up to Heraberg in his plain white robe with brass threads, and smiling, took out the books he had borrowed from the Traveler's Bag.
"Archbishop, I've finished them all."
As he spoke, Lumian felt Heraberg looked slightly older.
"Finished them all, really?" Heraberg asked with a smile.
Lumian made a sound and honestly replied, "There are two books I didn't listen to, but I can't continue anymore."
Heraberg nodded approvingly. "If you know, you know. If you don't know, you don't know; there's no need to pretend."
As he took the books, he said, "There's indeed no need to read these anymore. I must remind you, these books are infected with a plague, as are the other items in your bag. You need to handle them properly, burn or purify them to prevent the plague from spreading."
"Celeste's Grade 1 Sealed Artifact is so potent? It continues to produce a Plague even inside the Traveler's Bag..." Lumian said sincerely, "I'll be careful. Thank you, Archbishop. Archbishop, how do I seal an object that spreads a deadly plague?"

Heraberg looked at Lumian for a few seconds, then laughed.
He pointed to another brass bookshelf. "That one, that one, and that one, take a look and learn."
Indeed, teachers never give direct answers... Lumian didn't resist continuing his studies. He pulled out the books and placed them in his Traveler's Bag.
Then he smiled and asked, "Your Grace, what should I do to leave Morora?"
The white-haired Heraberg said meaningfully, "No one has ever forbidden the residents here from leaving Morora, they simply don't want to leave."
Lumian was momentarily stunned, then asked with sudden realization, "Leave the way you came?"
Heraberg showed a look of approval, then pointed to Lumian's clothes. "Do you want a change of clothes?"
Lumian looked down and saw his clothes, pants, and shoes had become tattered from the previous intense battle.
He was about to take out spare clothes from the Traveler's Bag but remembered they were also infected with the mystical plague.
Heraberg pointed to a room near the stairs.
"There are clothes you can change into."
"Thank you, Your Grace." Lumian sighed in relief and quickly entered the room, finding several plain white robes with brass threads hanging inside.
These were the vestments of the Church of Knowledge clergy.
Lumian glanced back thoughtfully at Heraberg, who had resumed reading, and swiftly changed into a robe that fit his size.
He then opened the cathedral's heavy, ajar wooden door and descended the stone steps layer by layer, deep into the underground.
The passageway hadn't changed since he came; the glowing gems embedded in the walls still provided some illumination.
That indescribable terrifying sound echoed in Lumian's ears again.
Lumian walked at a steady pace towards the exit. As 0-01's proxy, the more he walked, the more he felt this might indeed be a long esophagus.
What kind of creature would have such an esophagus? Lumian pondered but couldn't find an answer.
Alert to this possibility, he neither transformed into a flaming spear nor teleported, instead walking obediently for several hours until he reached the double bronze doors.
He extended his hands and pulled, making the door emit a heavy sound as it slowly opened.
Outside, no one was guarding it.

Lumian sneered silently and stepped out.
He didn't forget to close the door behind him.
Wearing the plain white robe with brass threads, he walked back, feeling unseen, unknown gazes upon him.
Reaching the prison where he had been held, Lumian activated the black mark on his right shoulder.
He chose to teleport back to Trier, to the apartment he rented.
His body and spirit were in decent shape, but he felt a strong sense of fatigue, wanting to rest.
Just as his figure materialized, he saw Ludwig enjoying afternoon tea.
Ludwig looked up and froze.
Clang!
The silver fork in the boy's hand fell onto the dessert plate.

Chapter 843: Black Tear

Seeing the genuine fear in Ludwig's eyes, Lumian looked down at himself and noticed the plain white robe with brass threads he was wearing.

He laughed and reassured his godson, "Don't be afraid. There's no exam, and no study."

Ludwig's eyes lit up, and his expression gradually relaxed.

For a moment, he had feared that his godfather had joined the Church of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom, thinking the sky was falling.

Lumian glanced at Lugano, who had hurriedly stood up. He took the former Carnivore bar owner's stomach from the Traveler's Bag and tossed it to Ludwig.

"This is a gift for you."

Having completed his journey to Morora, Lumian was no longer bound by his promises and could now obtain godhood. He decided to accelerate the formation of his hunter team, with Ludwig being the most important member.

Taming this sealed Angel involved granting favors.

Ludwig's expression turned ecstatic, as if he had just ascended from the abyss to heaven.

He eagerly prepared to devour the stomach of the Depriver on the spot.

Lumian rubbed his temples and cautioned, "That's infected with a mystical pathogen. You'd better handle it properly to prevent the disease from spreading."

"A mystical pathogen..." Lugano exclaimed, instinctively distancing himself from Ludwig.

As a professional Doctor, Lugano activated his Spirit Vision, focusing on the stomach for two seconds before confirming the presence of the disease.

Ludwig took a bite at the stomach's pylorus and mumbled, "Once it's in my stomach, the plague won't spread."

"And what about you?" Lumian asked, amused.

"At most, I'll have an upset stomach for a while," Ludwig answered nonchalantly.

Should I skip purifying the food in my Traveler's Bag? Since it wouldn't hurt you...

Lumian mumbled and turned toward his bedroom.

After taking a few more bites, Ludwig lifted his head and hesitantly said, "Thank you. Thank you, godfather."

Lumian smiled, nodding in satisfaction. "Not bad. Your manners have improved a lot."

Ludwig shivered suddenly.
His godfather's tone and expression now resembled those of his most feared people-his teachers!
Lumian said nothing more, heading to his bedroom. He spread out a letter paper and wrote down the key points of his journey to Morora, detailing the problems he had encountered.
Then he summoned the "doll" messenger, handing over the letter along with the Traveler's Bag.
The "doll" messenger disdainfully picked up the Traveler's Bag with two fingers, complaining, "Don't put everything in here! It's too dirty! It's too dirty! It's a trash can now!"
Lumian smiled sheepishly. "I had no other choice."
I can't carry those Sealed Artifacts directly, right?
Their negative effects combined could kill me instantly.
After sending off the "doll" messenger, Lumian collapsed onto his bed without cleaning up the makeshift altar on his desk. He closed his eyes, letting his body relax.
In Morora, he had stayed up late reading and couldn't sleep soundly with a mad Demoness living next door and other enemies possibly ambushing him at any moment, keeping his mind on high alert.
Now, he finally felt a long-lost sense of safety.
Lumian quickly fell into a deep sleep. When he woke, it was already six in the morning of a new day.
Ah, refreshing and comfortable. Lumian sat up, stretched, and saw his Traveler's Bag and a letter on his desk.
"The messenger came without me awakening... This means I trust her quite a bit..." Lumian muttered as he walked to his desk and drew the curtains.
In the morning light, he sat down and read Madam Magician's reply: "For now, leaving a mark to become a proxy is enough. Other matters can be dealt with later. In short, regarding 0-01, you've at least gotten ahead of the Demoness Sect and the Red Angel.
"However, no matter how beneficial something seems, it always has its drawbacks. This means you've officially stepped onto the stage vying for the Red Priest position. You will face more attention and danger. Previously, the Demoness Sect might have seen you as a potential ally, and the Red Angel might have considered using you. Now, eliminating you to vacate the proxy position will be a practical option for them.
"You should also remind Two of Cups to be cautious to avoid being exploited by the Demoness Sect.
"Of course, since both the Demoness Sect and the Red Angel have gained something from this, each leaving a bit of blood on 0-01,

their immediate urgency to target you is not very high.
"Regarding the Abscessed Hand, due to significant catastrophes in the Fourth, Third, and Second Epochs, many folklore and legends have not survived. The high-level corruption from the Great Mother on the Abscessed Hand prevents us from direct divination, requiring indirect methods, making it hard to obtain the most effective information. We haven't determined when the related legends first appeared but can confirm their existence at the beginning of the Fifth Epoch.
"From your description of its appearance and state, we reasonably suspect that the Abscessed Hand was a Vampire of Angel rank before its death. According to information from the Sanguine, one of the three dukes, an ancient being born in the Second Epoch, Round Moon Duke Olmer, has no memory of such a kin.
"Note that a Sequence 2 Angel is equivalent to a duke among the Sanguine. Even in the long history of the Sanguine, the number of dukes is very limited, and it's impossible for them not to recognize or remember each other.
"The New City of Silver is currently searching through historical texts related to Omebella for possible clues. I will inform you if they find anything."
Hand Bro isn't a Sanguine. No wonder Madam Magician calls him a vampire.
High-level beings of the Moon pathway are not equivalent to the Sanguine, just like the followers of the Primordial Moon in the Rose School of Thought are not considered Sanguine but are referred to as Artificial Vampires or something...
Lumian leaned back in his chair and continued reading.
"You can also try to get information from the Aurora Order. The secrets the one they believe in holds are among the top even among true gods.
"According to my divination, Albus Medici is still alive. His ancestor, the Red Angel, reached some sort of tacit agreement with someone or something in the special mirror world after entering Fourth Epoch Trier through the Hostel plan. This had significantly reduced the danger for Albus to escape from Morora through the special mirror world.
"No need for regrets. This is good news. At least we know the Red Angel might be cooperating with powerful beings in the special mirror world.
"The Grade 1 Sealed Artifact is called Black Tear, created from the tear of a Demoness of Despair after her death, fusing with her Beyonder characteristics.
"Black Tear continuously produces the mystical pathogen that

infected you, spreading it around without stopping.
"Wearing Black Tear significantly enhances your charm, with a slight feminine touch, but it won't change your gender.
"Black Tear can help you master some mirror magic, including passing messages through the mirror world, Mirror Traversal, and mirror illusions.
"It also makes your Cull more lethal, allowing you to infuse all your power into a single Cull.
"In places with a special mirror world, Black Tear can help you utilize its special characteristics and power.
"Those were the effects. The negative effects are:
"The wearer also gets infected with the mystical pathogen, with Demonesses of Affliction being less affected and more resistant;
"The wearer experiences intermittent Pleasure, every 45 to 90 seconds;
"Even just carrying it makes you more emotional, more easily moved, and persuaded;
"Having Black Tear also increases the likelihood of unwanted romantic encounters, based on the curse from the Demoness of Despair before her death."
Reading this, Lumian couldn't help but raise an eyebrow.
This Sealed Artifact seems more suitable for a forbidden book like Monks Chasing Dogs.
Pleasure every 45 to 90 seconds is a major problem in battle!
Franca can't use it either, unless it's a quick fight. The mystical plague takes time.
For now, I can only treat it as an unlimited Mirror Cufflink, using it briefly and then sealing it... Lumian pondered and continued reading Madam Magician's sealing methods.
"The most versatile solution is to find a Sealed Artifact of the Sun pathway that continuously purifies the surrounding area, placing it with Black Tear. How to mitigate the Sun pathway Sealed Artifact's negative effects is another matter.
"The simplest but most demanding solution is to place Black Tear in a mirror, confining the pathogen to the area behind the mirror. Don't worry, the Plague can't travel through the mirror. The issue is that without other items to interact with the mirror world, you can't retrieve Black Tear. If the mirror sealing it breaks, Black Tear will be lost in the mirror world, wandering who knows where.
"The custom solution is that I've isolated a separate space in your Traveler's Bag. Regularly throw in a flame that can burn for over half an hour to incinerate the mystical pathogen.
"I've also purified the other items in your Traveler's Bag. No need to worry about infection."

Lumian finished reading the letter and exhaled deeply.
This is the benefit of the Tarot Club!
After burning the letter, he checked the Traveler's Bag, confirming that Celeste's Demoness of Affliction Beyonder characteristic was a beautiful eye, stored with the corpse chunks in the isolated space with Black Tear. To use it later, he would need to purify or "disinfect" it first.
Hanging the Traveler's Bag, Lumian walked to the full-length mirror in the room.

Chapter 844: Changes in the Body

Lumian placed his hand on the mirror's surface, activating the contract ability that represented the Mirror Mark.

Immediately, he sensed multiple marks he had left behind. Some were clear, others blurred, and some were like distant glimmers on the horizon.

The clear ones came from Moran Avigny's study and Franca's rented apartment.

The blurry ones, which often changed locations, originated from the treasury of the Blue Avenger. The distant glimmers gave Lumian a feeling of being separated by a vast night, unreachable- they were the marks he had left on various mirrors in Morora.

At the same time, Lumian felt a strong calling. He sensed a unique, solid, and tight connection between himself and the City of Exiles.

In his mind's eye, a dark, illusory world and the mountain of corpses appeared.

The scent of rust and blood filled his nostrils, and his forehead tingled slightly.

If I want, I can use Black Tear now, enter the mirror, and teleport back to Morora...

Lumian suddenly realized.

Of course, such a teleportation had to pass through the special mirror world, which was extremely dangerous for Lumian.

He refocused, examining the changes in his body after becoming a proxy for 0-01.

It didn't take long for him to reach a conclusion.

In Morora, 0-01 will help me absorb some of the damage. I can influence the weather, either making it similar or turning it into a disaster. I can create a small area of Fog of War, use abilities like War Cry and War Song to enhance myself and my team, and weaken enemies...

Additionally, I can temporarily become equivalent to a Sequence 4 Iron-blooded Knight, lacking only godhood and an incomplete mythical form. Otherwise, I possess all the qualities, albeit slightly weaker than a true Iron-blooded Knight.

It's like receiving a Sequence 4 boon, although high-level boons also come with godhood...

If I abandon my sense of self, I can momentarily approach Sequence 3...

However, all this can only be realized in Morora. With 0-01 sealed, it cannot exert influence outside Morora.

But the changes to my body as a proxy, or rather the corruption, are real and irreversible.

My physical resistance to damage has significantly improved. Although it's not as good as a Dawn Paladin in full armor, I'm no longer at risk of instant death from a headshot. Without targeting weaknesses or using Cull, it takes two to three shots to crack my skull...
My strength, speed, reflexes, constitution, and agility have also improved. My body is becoming more robust and masculine. Luckily, I can use flame shaving.
Otherwise, half a day would leave me scruffy...
My spirituality has increased by about forty to fifty percent. Now, with regular accumulation and storage, I no longer suffer from anxiety due to a lack of spirituality...
According to Grande Soeur's and Franca's terminology, my resistance to flames has also increased significantly. Flames not hot enough won't hurt me. At least Sequence 5 blazing-white flames are needed for any effect. When using Devil's Whispers in the future, the damage and pain from the sulfurous flames will be much lower... Huh, I've also grown three to four centimeters taller...
Lumian felt like an oversized, reinforced Reaper.
My long studies weren't in vain... He sighed, opening his bedroom door and stepping out.
Ludwig had just woken up, wearing a blue hat with yellow stars and energetically drinking milk.
Lumian glanced at Lugano busy in the kitchen and asked his godson with a smile, "What did you make with the Depriver's stomach yesterday, and how much is left?"
Ludwig was stunned for a second. "I ate it all."
"..." Lumian raised an eyebrow. "I thought you'd save some to make a special dish and share it with us."
Ludwig was silent for a few seconds, then honestly replied, "I couldn't resist its allure."
Lumian stared at the boy until he looked down guiltily.
"I'll let it go this time. I understand your desire, but know your mistake and correct it, understood?" Lumian's expression softened.
He wasn't angry about Ludwig eating the entire Depriver's stomach, missing out on his share. To him, it was no big deal. His sternness was part of the education.
As a godfather and the team leader, he was responsible for this. Only by doing so could he quickly complete the ritual and advance to an Iron-blooded Knight.
"Yes, godfather," Ludwig whispered.
Lumian sat down, waiting for his breakfast, and asked Ludwig, "Have you advanced to Depriver yet?"

"Almost, but I can use some Depriver abilities," Ludwig said, gulping down more milk.
Lumian nodded lightly, not asking further questions.
...
Trier, Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, 9 Rue Orosai, Apartment 702.
After breakfast, Lumian went to see Franca and Jenna.
He politely rang the doorbell, mindful that at this hour, the two Demonesses might be scantily clad.
With winter over, the Demonesses could wear only light clothes indoors thanks to their resistance to the cold.
Ding-dong, ding-dong. Wearing a woman's shirt, fitted trousers, and fluffy slippers, Franca opened the door.
She looked at Lumian in surprise. "You're back from the City of Exiles?"
That's too fast!
Last time they contacted, he was still studying!
Lumian walked past Franca, saying with a smile, "I used up your Mirror Cufflink."
"That's fine." With her new Ice Amulet, Franca generously waved it off.
Lumian was about to speak when he saw Jenna at the dining table. Her facial skin looked deeply cleansed, smooth and delicate. Her crystalline eyes were like autumn streams, hiding a thousand emotions and words, inviting immersion. The simple, light-colored dress outlined a perfect but not exaggerated figure. Her exposed skin radiated indescribable charm.
Lumian's throat tightened, and he felt an uncontrollable heat.
After a few seconds, he averted his gaze and asked Jenna thoughtfully, "Did you advance to Pleasure?"
"Yes," Jenna replied with a mischievous smile. "Looks like that potion wasn't fake."
Lumian let out a derisive snort.
"Were you showcasing your charm just now?"
"No," Jenna laughed softly. "Maybe the potion's power is still leaking after my recent advancement. But, your self-control isn't as strong as I thought."
Um... Lumian thought his reaction was uncharacteristic of an Ascetic. He suspected residual malice from using Devil's Whispers, needing time to dissipate.
And the Traveler's Bag now held Black Tear-though isolated, the bag couldn't fully block the Grade 1 Sealed Artifact's influence. Some negative effects would always seep out.
That's why he needed to burn the mystical pathogen in the

isolated space regularly.
Finding an excuse, Lumian scoffed.
"That's because I'm still weak, with noticeable emotional and desire fluctuations."
Watching their interaction, Franca felt a pang of jealousy for some reason. She quickly changed the subject, excitedly sharing, "When Jenna advanced, we got some crucial, unexpected intel. Guess what it is."
Lumian pulled up a chair and sat down, thinking."Related to Krismona?"
Franca sat nearby and clicked her tongue.
"Sharp. Guess who Krismona's father is."
Lumian wanted to observe Franca and Jenna's expressions, but their combined beauty made him instinctively look away.
After some consideration, he guessed, "With your tone and attitude... I'll go with the least likely option: Blood Emperor Alista Tudor!"
Franca and Jenna's expressions froze.
Lumian asked in slight disbelief, "I got it right?"
"Yes, congratulations." Franca nodded solemnly.
"Th-this isn't mystical..." Lumian echoed their earlier doubts.
The two Demonesses then recounted their discussion.
As Lumian listened, he frowned slightly.
"What's wrong?" Jenna asked perceptively.
Lumian stroked his chin.
"I remembered something from my time in Morora."
"What?" Franca had been curious about Lumian's experiences in Morora.
Considering the corruption from knowledge related to 0-01, Lumian focused on his conflicts with Albus, Julie, and Wanak, emphasizing the importance of books and knowledge.
"In short, I'm now the proxy for 0-01, but this power only works in Morora."
Lumian pondered. "What puzzles me is why I escaped after being petrified by Julie's divine descent and didn't die."
Franca clicked her tongue.
"You Hunters, always fighting with schemes and layers of plans, not straightforward at all!"
She then laughed.
"I think the Primordial One threw you out to save the Blood Emperor's last hope of resurrection during the divine descent. What's this? True love!"
Lumian didn't immediately refute her near-joking statement. After a few seconds, he thoughtfully said, "Maybe it's not true love, but a

practical need. Maybe the purpose of the Primordial Demoness and Blood Emperor creating the special mirror world can only proceed after the Blood Emperor's resurrection..."

Chapter 845: Busy Franca

Jenna agreed with Lumian, "Whether it's true love or not, there must be a specific purpose behind creating that special mirror world, and it seems that purpose hasn't been achieved yet."

"What could that purpose be?" Franca pondered.

Lumian thought for a few seconds, then pulled out the corpse wax candle he had obtained from the Blue Avenger from his Traveler's Bag, and mused aloud, "That special mirror world might have been jointly created by a true god of the Hunter pathway and a true god of the Demoness pathway. This corpse wax candle was crafted from the corpse wax of demigods from both pathways, mixed with other substances. According to the Law of Similarity in mysticism, there might be a connection between the two.

"When I become a demigod, I'll visit Bansy, find the specific location mentioned by Madam Magician, light the corpse wax candle, and complete a secret deed ritual to see what I can discover. This might help us uncover the secrets of the special mirror world."

As for Fourth Epoch Trier, entering the sealed area after the Hostel plan would be a true god-level difficulty.

"At that time, apply for a Major Arcana card holder to watch over the matter."

Franca had no objections, just reminding Lumian to be cautious.

After exchanging experiences over the recent period, Franca relaxed, leaned back in her chair, and said with bright eyes, "You went to Morora and didn't gain much on the Hunter side, only becoming the proxy for 0-01. But you got a lot from the Demoness pathway, like the Beyonder characteristic of a Demoness of Affliction, a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact equivalent to that of a Demoness of Despair."

"What are you implying?" Lumian asked with a smile.

Franca chuckled. "I don't need it. I should be able to get what I need from the Demoness Sect. The only concern is how to complete the ritual. I wish I could go to Morora. It's perfect for the Demoness of Despair ritual-no guilt involved. Just hearing your examples, I know that place is full of talent, criminal talent, people exploring the limits of human evil!

"I mean, Jenna's Beyonder characteristics up to Sequence 4 are in our full possession. You don't plan to sell them, do you?"

Jenna said instinctively, "But I still haven't saved enough money for the Demoness of Affliction Beyonder characteristic. I'm still short by tens of thousands of verl d'or..."

Lumian chuckled. "No need to worry. From now on, you two are

officially part of my team. As the team leader, I'll reward you based on your contributions. It could be money or items."
He made it clear-these things were meant for Jenna. It's not like he could consume them himself. But since they were a team, there had to be clear rewards and punishments, not giving away things for free.
Even giving Ludwig the Depriver's stomach was under the pretense of a godfather returning from a trip and bringing a gift for his godson.
Jenna's expression relaxed, and she teased with a smile in her eyes, "Should we call you Captain now?"
"No need. A good team can address each other by names or nicknames." Lumian turned his gaze to Franca, revisiting the old topic. "I used up your Mirror Cufflink. What compensation do you want?"
"No need to be so polite." With her Ice Amulet, Franca waved it off generously.
"If I need to use Black Tear or the Sword of Courage in the future, I'll borrow them from you. Don't worry, I'm thick-skinned and won't feel embarrassed."
As she spoke, she took out the Lie earring and tossed it back to Lumian. "You should keep this. I'm afraid I'll be tempted to permanently alter my face and body, getting addicted to Lie."
Lumian knew Franca wasn't pretending to be generous. He caught Lie and reminded her, "Be extra careful when dealing with the Demoness of Black. She'll soon learn about my involvement in the 0-01 battle in Morora and suspect I was the one who persisted till the end."
"Understood." Franca nodded solemnly.
Jenna's eyes flickered, and she thoughtfully said, "Should I move out for a while?"
Seeing Franca's puzzled look and Lumian's approving nod, Jenna explained carefully, "The Demoness of Black might secretly monitor you to gather information about Lumian. If I continue living with you, I'll inevitably attract her attention. Facing prolonged observation from a high-ranking Demoness, I don't think I can keep my secrets.
"Think about it. I now have the charm of a Demoness of Pleasure, different from the beauty of a Vampire. A few more glances from the Demoness of Black, and she'll notice something's wrong. If I live elsewhere, I can disguise this charm before visiting you with makeup or using Lie."
Lie couldn't be worn all the time, and maintaining makeup even while sleeping would also arouse suspicion from the Demoness of

Black!
"Alright." Franca was convinced by Jenna's reasoning.
She glanced at Lumian with some resentment, thinking, You really do bring trouble. With the Demoness of Black watching me, how can I help Jenna digest the Pleasure potion?
Franca sighed and asked Lumian, "When will you take Amandina to the Samaritan Women's Spring?"
"You came back too quickly. I haven't had time to get to know her better yet," Franca complained.
Lumian pondered for a few seconds. "When my condition stabilizes."
The rest of the time, Jenna packed her personal belongings and went out to find an apartment in the surrounding area that she could move into that day, while Lumian returned to his place to continue "taming" Ludwig.
Franca continued to track the whereabouts of the Mirror Person, Jasmine, until nightfall.
Looking at the empty and cold apartment, she sighed inwardly and threw herself onto the long sofa.
After a while, the surface of the full-length mirror in the living room suddenly shimmered with a dark light. The face of the Demoness of Black faintly appeared.
Franca stood up abruptly and respectfully bowed. "Good evening, Madame Clarice."
At the same time, she mumbled in her heart, The Demoness of Black really knows where I live...
The Demoness of Black, Clarice, looked at Franca outside the mirror, her expression somewhat detached, and asked, "Has your lover, Ciel, returned to Trier?"
"He has." Franca had prepared for this and answered honestly.
The Demoness of Black scrutinized Franca for a moment, then chuckled softly.
"You've been apart for several weeks. You must be thoroughly enjoying each other's company upon reuniting. Has he become more vigorous?"
You're asking me? Whom should I ask? How would I know... What's the point of this question? Franca silently grumbled.
Such a question was entirely outside her and Lumian's expectations!
At that moment, cold sweat appeared on Franca's back as her mind raced, pushing her thinking ability to its limits.
Vigorous...
The Demoness of Black once said that the taste of a Hunter isn't bad either-the higher their Sequence, the more vigorous they

become...
Is the Demoness of Black trying to confirm Lumian's current state from this detail, to see if he has become the proxy for 0-01?
If Lumian and I were truly lovers, such a detail would be easily overlooked, and it's normal for Demonesses to discuss such things. In that case, I would naturally reveal the answer the Demoness of Black is looking for.
Should I hide it for Lumian? No, he's already highly suspicious. Hiding it would mean dragging myself into suspicion. Though I might already be suspected...
Lumian said this morning not to lie about it, but not to be too clear...
Within two or three seconds, Franca raised her right hand, covered her mouth, and let out a small yawn.
Then, she said with a mix of shyness and pride, "Although he hasn't advanced yet and is quite far from it, he has indeed become much more vigorous. I almost feel conquered..."
As she spoke, Franca's words carried a bit of longing, as if dreaming of becoming equally vigorous.
This was part of her "acting training" from Jenna and Anthony- performance needing layers.
The Demoness of Black in the mirror nodded and said with a smile, "Truly enviable."
Franca's eyes moved slightly, and she said, reminiscing, "Whether it's due to the long separation or his many hidden secrets, I feel he's become a lot more unfamiliar. Sometimes, when he looks at me, I think, 'Who is he?' and feel like I don't recognize him..."
The Demoness of Black nodded slightly.
"He might have undergone some kind of corruption. Keep your current relationship. If he shows any unusual behavior, let me know immediately. I might be able to help.
"Heh heh, this might also be one of your opportunities to digest the Affliction potion."
"Yes, Madame Clarice." Franca displayed the sense of security that came from having a powerful backer.
The Demoness of Black glanced around the mirror and asked with a smile, "Where's your Vampire lover?"
"Her brother is returning to Trier soon, so she's embarrassed to continue living with me." Franca recited her lines.
The Demoness of Black asked no more questions, gave some instructions regarding the Mirror People, and disappeared into the dark light.
Once the full-length mirror returned to normal, Franca quietly breathed a sigh of relief and prepared to "date" Lumian.

She hadn't even had time to open the door when a soft light appeared before her -a transparent, crystalline ice-blue jellyfish with many tentacles quickly materialized.
One of the jellyfish's tentacles was wrapped around a letter.
Franca recognized the jellyfish as Ongla, the messenger of Madam Judgment.
Every time she saw Ongla, Franca instinctively felt a sense of fear, believing it to be very powerful. However, Ongla the jellyfish, unlike the intelligent puppet messenger of Madam Magician, often acted purely on instinct.
Receiving the letter, Franca silently grumbled, I'm feeling swarmed... I was already busy helping Lumian with his affairs, and even now that he's back, I'm still so busy.
Thanking Ongla the jellyfish, Franca opened the letter: "Mr. Star has confirmed the first task that requires your help."

Chapter 846: "Negotiation"

Upon reading the first line of the letter, Franca felt a sense that the moment had finally arrived.

She had been waiting, waiting for Mr. Star to make a request, so she could exchange it for Mid-to-Low Sequence potions from the Evernight pathway for Amandina.

Franca read the rest with a mix of anticipation and nervousness: "He hopes you can help him decipher the text in the attached materials. They are somewhat similar to those in Emperor Roselle's diary.

"He hasn't set a time limit, so you can take your time.

"The information you provided about Krismona's father possibly being Blood Emperor Alista Tudor is very useful and important.

"Now, we suspect that the entity in the deepest part of the special mirror world, the one worshiped by the Mirror People, may not be the Primordial Demoness in the complete sense. Rather, it could be connected to the creation of the special mirror world by the Blood Emperor and the Primordial Demoness. It seems to have gone out of their control, and this might be why the Primordial Demoness is in a bad state.

"Your main tasks with Seven of Cups are to find the Mirror Person, Jasmine, and probe the Demoness of Black to see if she has a deep understanding of the special mirror world. Of course, your safety must be ensured.

"If you encounter any anomalies, you can ask me for help."

Madam Judgment sure goes straight to the point... Franca turned to the next page of the letter.

The rest were the attached materials.

Franca's pupils dilated upon seeing them: This wasn't anything like the text from Emperor Roselle's diary!

It was either oracle bone script or bronze script, one of the oldest forms of writing from her and Emperor Roselle's country pre-transmigration!

Where did this come from?

Who the hell knows this stuff...

Not sure if it's genuine oracle bone script or bronze script, since I don't understand it either. I'm illiterate in this...

Is it a mysticism language unknown to this world, just similar to oracle bone script?

But it does look like hieroglyphics!

Franca began to examine it carefully.

Although she hadn't studied oracle bone script or bronze script, as a young person growing up in the internet age, she had seen a few

and remembered the meanings of some of the simplest characters, like "person."
Before long, she found several similar pictographic characters.
A bit different from what I remember, but mostly the same...
Let's treat it as oracle bone script or bronze script first... Where did Mr. Star get this from? Did they find Harrison of Resurrection Island? No, if they did, they would have told me...
Or, when the Major Arcana card holder of the Moses Ascetic Order was tracking the missing Ten Pillars Kmerolo, they encountered something related to the Celestial Master?
Very possible! No wonder the preface of this material told me that the order of the text had been disrupted to prevent corruption during interpretation. As expected from the Celestial Master, who oversees the Mystery Pryer and Savant pathways!
But without context, the difficulty of interpretation is more than doubled...
Chen Tu! Armored Shadow Chen Tu might know, but I can only ask three or four questions per summoning... Don't know if I can directly ask what the general meaning of this material is...
Franca's mind raced, deciding to seek help from the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society first.
Many members of the society came from the same country as her, and there were quite a few highly educated ones, some of whom might have studied oracle bone script or bronze script.
Franca didn't need them to be masters in oracle bone script or bronze script, just being able to recognize the commonly used characters would be enough. The rest could be guessed by the Major Arcana card holders based on the original context.
With this decision, Franca enthusiastically began writing a letter, planning to summon Madame Hela's messenger to request a gathering soon.
She was too lazy to head out to go on a "date" with Lumian and discuss the Demoness of Black. After eating a cream bun, she sat at her desk and carefully selected the characters she barely recognized, studying them repeatedly.
...
In the apartment Lumian rented in Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative.
Lumian sat on the sofa, watching Ludwig read the Ghost Face magazine, and pondered the next steps of "taming."
After a few minutes, he smiled at Ludwig.
"You've been pretty free lately, haven't you? Besides eating, you have nothing else to do.
"Let me give you an assignment."

The key to "taming" was to make the other party follow orders, even forcing themselves to do things they didn't want to do.
Of course, pure intimidation and suppression wouldn't work. Once or twice was fine, but more than that, Ludwig would definitely run away again.
Ludwig's expression turned to horror, as if saying: "See, you have indeed been corrupted by the Church of Knowledge!"
Without giving him a chance to speak, Lumian continued, "This assignment is to taste Trier's famous meat pies. Gather information yourself, plan the route yourself, and finally compile a food report."
The first step in following orders was to make the orders acceptable to the child, something he could and would do, then gradually increase the difficulty.
Ludwig's eyes lit up.
He licked his lips and said, "Alright!"
The little boy glanced out the window and eagerly stood up. "I'll go right now!"
Lumian chuckled. "It's already dark, and it's too dangerous outside. You're just a child."
Too dangerous... just a child... Lugano couldn't help but glance at Ludwig, his face full of disapproval.
Lumian sighed and said, "I mean, you're just a child with insufficient self-control. It's more dangerous for the citizens of Trier walking at night."
He then told Ludwig, "Tonight, gather information from newspapers and magazines, make a plan, and go out tomorrow morning."
"Mm-hmm!" Ludwig jumped off the single sofa and started flipping through the newspapers and magazines they had subscribed to, taking it very seriously.
Satisfied, Lumian nodded, returned to his bedroom, and placed a continuously burning incandescent white flame in the separate space of his Traveler's Bag.
After a while, he took out the completely charred, deformed piece of Celeste's corpse, examining it for a few moments.
According to Franca's Magic Mirror Divination, this could be refined and extracted to replace the tail tip of the Two-Tailed Black Snake in the Affliction potion's supplementary ingredients.
The supplementary ingredients' Flower-Faced Bat blood also didn't need to be collected. Franca's blood was a better substitute.
Lumian stuffed the corpse piece back into the Traveler's Bag and took out the books he had borrowed from the Morora Knowledge Cathedral.

Although Madam Magician had already sealed Black Tear for him, useful knowledge was always welcome.
Of course, the more useful the knowledge, the more likely it was heavily corrupted, requiring careful consideration and trade-offs.
Lumian lit the gas wall lamp, picked a book titled "Entering the Mysterious Hall," and leisurely began to read.
As time passed, he suddenly turned his head to look at the door.
His door creaked open, and a figure emerged from the shadows.
It was Jenna, wearing a white shirt and a light gauze skirt. Her slightly darker flaxen hair was pinned up, her blue eyes bright and large, with a faint layer of powder on her face and a small black mole on the bridge of her nose.
Her white blouse, adorned with floral decorations, wasn't revealing, yet its nearly perfect curves made one's mind wander and mouth dry.
At that moment, Lumian felt as if he saw the past Showy Diva Jenna and actress apprentice Celia Bello overlapping, exuding an indescribable allure beneath her fresh appearance.
"I need your help with something," Jenna said with a slight smile as she closed the door.
Lumian suddenly felt a sense of danger-not to his life, but a different kind of unease.
"I'm afraid I can't help you," Lumian said calmly, relying on the traits of an Ascetic.
Jenna lowered her eyes, hiding the brilliance in her blue eyes.
She walked to the bedside, sat down, looked at Lumian again, and said with a smile, "Listen to me first, hear my reasons."
Lumian fell silent for a few seconds before stating, "Go ahead."
Jenna propped her hands on either side, leaning forward slightly in a somewhat playful manner. "It seems you've guessed it. Yes, I want you to help me digest the Pleasure potion."
As expected... Lumian said with a headache, "Why not ask Franca?"
"Two reasons, one superficial, one genuine. Which do you want to hear?" Jenna asked with a smile.
Lumian rubbed his forehead. "The superficial one."
Jenna pursed her lips and smiled self-deprecatingly. "She's very willing to help me digest the Pleasure potion, with no internal resistance, causing little pain. This wouldn't comply with the acting principle of pleasure bringing pain, slowing my potion digestion.
"But you, I know you're unwilling, resistant to this. The more so, the quicker I can digest the potion by making you experience pleasure, ultimately even feeling a bit reluctant, and the self-blame that follows. Also, a very important point is, you have a

false Angelic rank. If everything goes smoothly, I might be able to digest the potion within two or three weeks and consider advancing to Demoness of Affliction.
"As team leader, isn't this the best choice? It can effectively help you improve the team's quality and enhance the ritual's effect.
"You don't have to recommend Black Tear to me. Digesting the Pleasure potion requires a target."
Lumian remained silent.
Jenna couldn't help but scoff. "Just think of it as teleporting a teammate, lending strength to a teammate. I'm not seeking your emotions or soul. Without emotions, you've never cared about these things, always thinking you have no morals, right? Hey, do you have a cleanliness obsession? It's just helping out!"
After a few seconds, Lumian asked, "What about you?"
Jenna lowered her eyes and softly laughed. "I'll also experience pleasure in pain and feel pain in pleasure, very much in line with the acting principles."
Lumian remained silent for a while before asking, "What about Franca?"
Jenna bit her lip, her eyes deep. "If she finds out, it'll help her digest the Affliction potion."
Lumian sighed deeply. "I thought you'd try to seduce me, ignite my desires to achieve your goal. Didn't expect you to negotiate and reason with me."
Jenna wrinkled her nose and grumbled, "If I tried to seduce you, you'd teleport away!
"It's better to explain the pros and cons, tell you it's as normal as drinking water or having a meal. No guilt involved, no emotions needed. This is very common in Intis!"

Chapter 847: Pleasure in Pain

Seeing Lumian remain silent, Jenna smiled and said, "Doesn't a good team leader need to care about the personal needs of the team members and balance internal conflicts? Sure, when you Hunters reach a high sequence, you can easily subdue people and turn them into puppets without worrying about these things. But now, you can't do that yet."

Jenna's eyes flickered slightly as she added with a smile, "This benefits you as well. You once said that the emotions and desires suppressed by the Ascetic won't disappear completely. Some will accumulate little by little, and if they reach a certain level, they must be vented, or they'll become a hidden danger. And it seems you haven't vented in a long time.

"Killing people isn't enough to fully release these emotions, and there aren't enough bad guys for you to kill all at once."

At this point, Jenna looked at Lumian with clear eyes, teasing, "Alright, I've finished explaining my reasons, the benefits, and possible consequences of this. Captain, you need to make a decision."

Without waiting for Lumian to speak, Jenna pursed her lips and added in a low voice, "Also, there's another reason. We've been through many dangerous things. We don't know when we'll die or lose each other. I-I don't want to bid farewell with regrets."

After a moment of silence, Lumian sighed and said, "You've become quite an excellent Instigator."

Jenna blinked. "Does that mean you agree?"

Lumian nodded solemnly. "Only while you're a Demoness of Pleasure."

Jenna's slightly leaning body suddenly pulled back, and her shoulders, supported by her hands, dropped a little.

The emotions she had been suppressing finally released a little.

She lowered her gaze to her knees and smiled, half self-mockingly, half wistfully.

"When that happens, I can digest the Affliction potion."

Lumian remained silent.

After a few seconds, he said, "I'll find an opportunity to inform Franca about this as a sign of respect."

Jenna fell silent for a moment before saying with a smile, "I thought you'd seek Franca's opinion before making a decision."

Lumian sighed again.

"This is a sign of respect towards you."

He had sighed, having sensed the true emotions hidden in Jenna's words. Jenna knew that Franca was an unavoidable issue in this

matter, but she hoped that whatever the outcome-good or bad-it would only concern herself and her partner. As for Franca, she would deal with that separately. That's why when she was asked about Franca earlier, she suddenly became angry and irritated, spitefully saying it would help her digest the Affliction potion. Lumian only realized this through her response, and in that moment understood the mood behind their current banter.
Lumian changed the subject. "You are one of the most proactive people I've ever met."
"The good way of putting it is 'decisive and courageous,' the bad way is 'impulsive and reckless," Jenna said, her eyes like the waters of an autumn lake, now fully exhibiting the charm of a Demoness of Pleasure, smiling slightly, "Now, shouldn't we talk about something else?"
She removed the fake mole from the bridge of her nose and asked Lumian with a smile, "Do you remember what I told you about the different meanings of the fake mole when we first met?"
Lumian smiled wryly. "That was our second meeting."
"I didn't see you the first time, so it doesn't count," Jenna said, her hand holding the fake mole slowly sliding down, past her beautifully curved jaw, her long white neck, and the floral decorations on her chest, stopping at the second button of her blouse.
She smiled brightly and asked, "What does this mean?"
Lumian's gaze involuntarily followed Jenna's hand. He closed his eyes and said, "It means secrets."
Jenna laughed. She stood up slowly and walked over to Lumian, who was sitting at the desk.
Her voice turned low, as if it was scratching Lumian's ear.
"I know it's hard for you to take the initiative right now, that you're hesitating to take that step. It's okay, I'll guide you.
"As expected, you're still a virgin..."
Jenna chuckled softly and walked up to Lumian, placing her hands on his shoulders.
After a second, she lowered her head and pressed her lips against Lumian's.
Lumian smelled the fragrance and felt the softness and sweetness, along with the slight coolness and trembling of her lips, and the nervousness and apprehension.
...
Inside Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai.
Franca studied those characters late into the night and finally received a reply from Madame Hela, who agreed to convene a full gathering of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society soon.

Phew, Franca entered the room, sat at the small analyzer, and shared with the telegraph group members that she had come across some ancient characters that seemed to predate their transmigration. She then chatted with 007 and the others until after one in the morning.
The next day, she woke up around eight.
The habits she had developed recently and the matters on her mind kept her from sleeping in.
After washing up and having breakfast, Franca hesitated about her next move.
Should I find Lumian first to tell him about the Demoness of Black and the oracle bone script, or should I find Anthony to see if he's heard anything about the mineralogist, Jasmine, from the adventurers and smugglers who frequently enter Underground Trier?
After a few seconds of deliberation, Franca decided to find Anthony first because the Hypnotist usually left early and returned late, busy collecting intelligence and advancing his membership in the Psychology Alchemists. If she missed him now, she'd have to wait until the evening.
Besides, proactively seeking out Lumian could expose his current residence to the Demoness of Black. She planned to wait until the evening when Lumian would come to her.
...
With the curtains slightly parted, Lumian stood there shirtless, silently gazing at Ludwig who was savoring a meat pie from the shop across the street. He seemed somewhat refreshed and invigorated.
To his side and slightly behind him, Jenna lay on her stomach in bed, the covers draped diagonally across her. Her lower legs were drawn up and swaying gently in the air, while her face still bore a faint flush.
She gazed at Lumian's side profile and chuckled softly. "Are you embarrassed?"
Lumian let out a derisive snort. "Last night, who was the one embarrassed in the end? First, you insisted on drawing the curtains, then you wanted me to create a wall of spirituality to block the noise, then you said the wall of spirituality wasn't enough and demanded a Bottle of Fiction, then you suddenly got scared and wanted to do a rain check, perhaps another time..."
Jenna laughed softly. "That was to make you eager, to unleash the emotions and desires you've been suppressing with the Ascetic's tolerance.
"I must say, you performed well yesterday, much better than I

expected. Of course, at first, your performance was quite in line with your state of innocence."
Lumian chuckled in amusement and replied, "Are all you Demonesses so stubborn with words, insistent on getting the last word?"
"Learned from the best, you." Jenna nodded emphatically, indicating that it was true.
She then laughed. "Why won't you look at me? Are you really embarrassed?"
She seemed to have regained the feeling she had when she first faced Lumian.
Lumian tsked. "I have serious business to do. I need to keep an eye on Ludwig and secretly follow him later."
"Why?" Jenna asked in confusion, "Didn't you let Lugano take Ludwig around when we were in places like Port Santa?"
"Back then, I didn't know he was a sealed Angel, and there are many heretics in Trier," Lumian explained in detail, "When I went to Morora, I made sure Ludwig stayed indoors as much as possible. As long as there was food, he could stay at home. My concern is that if he wanders around Trier, he might run into other followers of the Devouring Whirlpool. Lugano is only a Sequence 7 and not particularly good at combat."
"In that case, Ludwig might follow the Devouring Whirlpool's followers, and he's crucial for you to complete the ritual soon." Jenna suddenly understood.
Lumian withdrew his gaze, bent over, and tried to pick up his clothes from the floor.
After scanning the area, he decided to take out a new set from the Traveler's Bag.
Jenna watched him change clothes with a grin, then walk to the door.
Lumian paused at the door, hesitated to turn around, then held back, and said with a hum, "Ludwig is about to leave this street. You should rest well."
Jenna laughed. "Can you say that while looking at me?"
Seeing Lumian open the door and walk out, she laughed even more wantonly.
"Are you afraid to look at me because you can't resist, don't want to leave, and will be delayed?"
Jenna laughed happily the entire time until Lumian transformed into a shadow and left the apartment when tears seemed to well up in the corners of her eyes.
She looked at the full-length mirror in the room and saw a beautiful, enchanting woman with a smile on her lips and

sadness in her eyes.
...
Franca found Anthony in the café below his apartment.
Anthony took a sip of strong black coffee, raised his head, and said, "I was just about to find you."
"Got something?" Franca's eyes lit up as she sat down.
She habitually glanced around and noticed many people looking her way, but no one dared approach to overhear her conversation with Anthony.
I might need to disguise myself and go out looking less attractive at times. Each Sequence in the Demoness pathway significantly enhances feminine charm...
Sequence 4 onwards, the greatest increase in charm is from Demoness of Pleasure... Franca withdrew her gaze and looked at Anthony thoughtfully.
Anthony took out a stack of papers and said, "Based on the time and place you provided about mineralogist Jasmine's recent appearances in Underground Trier, I've been searching for adventurers, smugglers, and students who passed through those areas during the corresponding times. In the past few days, I finally made some progress.
"There are three people who fit the conditions, but they didn't encounter Jasmine nearby. However, they did meet someone else. Based on their descriptions, I made corresponding sketches and found they all seemed to have met the same person, who happens to be someone you're looking for."
"Someone else I'm looking for? Another Mirror Person?" Franca was puzzled.
Anthony unfolded three sheets of drawing paper and pushed them to Franca.
Franca received it and turned it around, quickly glancing at them.
Just one look, and her eyes froze.
Although the sketches on the three sheets had differences, it was clear they depicted the same person:
That person had short hair, soft facial contours, and features that weren't deep.
They had a distinctive appearance, not resembling anyone from any Northern Continent country, nor the darker-skinned people of the Southern Continent.
Franca recognized this person: It was indeed someone she was looking for!
He was suspected to be Harrison from Resurrection Island!

Chapter 848: Project Fishing

Harrison?

He's still in Trier?

007, how come you haven't found him yet? *Is your Eternal Blazing Sun Church even capable?*

As Franca's spirits lifted, feelings of joy and excitement welled up inside her.

She had mobilized members of the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society to keep an eye out for Harrison worldwide, but it turned out the target was still in Trier. Of course, he may have just returned recently.

While inwardly criticizing the Purifiers' work capabilities, Franca also sensed something unusual about this situation.

She lowered her voice and said thoughtfully, "Recently, Jasmine has appeared in Underground Trier twice, and people in the vicinity have encountered Harrison both times. This can't be a coincidence.

"Is Harrison collaborating with the Mirror People?"

Anthony ate the last cream puff and took a sip of coffee before saying, "This can actually be deduced.

"Mr. Hanged Man said that Harrison is likely to appear in places closely related to death, darkness, dusk, and decay, like the Samaritan Women's Spring deep in the fourth level of the underground catacombs. Based on the information we currently have, the appearance of the Samaritan Women's Spring originated from the War of the Four Emperors, from Fourth Epoch Trier.

"So, Harrison has a motive to open the seal and enter Fourth Epoch Trier, which aligns with the Mirror People's goals. Although it's unclear how they got in touch, don't forget that the Mirror People have deep cooperation with those Brokers."

"Those Brokers are more annoying than buzzing flies." Franca sighed sincerely.

She then turned to Anthony and said, "You can go take care of your own business now. I'll discuss with Jenna and Lumian how to use this to find Harrison."

"Alright." Anthony had already done his best in gathering intelligence.

After saying goodbye to Anthony, Franca went straight back to Rue Orosai.

Not wanting to expose Lumian's current residence, she planned to use a summoning messenger to have her two companions come over themselves.

I'll summon Rabbit Chasel first. *What reward should I give it this*

time? I can't let Jenna have her way; I feel like she's training Rabbit Chasel in a very dangerous direction... Franca thought for a few seconds, then turned her gaze to the coffee table.
There lay a book-after several months of delay, the sixth volume of Fors Wall's The Adventurer series was finally out!
This volume was titled "The Adventurer 6: The Future" Franca had just bought it yesterday and hadn't read it yet. She had only flipped through the afterword, seeing that the great writer Fors Wall said she had originally wanted to name this volume "Admiral of Stars" or "Biologist", but ultimately abandoned these ideas based on a sudden inspiration.
Soon, Franca summoned Rabbit Chasel.
Behind this coolly dressed Rabbit of Knowledge, a timid rabbit-shaped Spirit Body wearing boxing gloves faintly appeared in the void.
Tsk, putting on a show, are we? Franca smiled as she handed the letter paper and "The Adventurer 6" to Rabbit Chasel, instructing, "Remember to return it to me after reading."
It wasn't that she couldn't part with such a book, but maintaining a give-and-take relationship with Rabbit Chasel would help build a good rapport. In the future, she might be able to ask it to introduce other special "talents" from the Rabbits of Knowledge who could also serve as messengers.
Rabbit Chasel's eyes lit up. "Absolutely no problem!"
After sending off Rabbit Chasel, Franca summoned Penitent Baynfel.
After completing these two tasks, she lay down in the armchair and pondered her next moves.
I need to notify 007 in the telegram group tonight...
Should I try to contact Professor and the others, mobilize the power of the Mystery Pryers to search for Harrison together?
Sigh, now we've only confirmed Harrison is in Trier, lacking substantial clues to investigate. We can't even go all out even if we wanted to...
We can't just wander around Underground Trier every day, waiting for the right opportunity, can we?
Magic Mirror Divination can't provide answers...
Hmm, I still need to report this quickly. Mr. Hanged Man and the other Major Arcana card holders are also looking for Harrison themselves...
Franca sat up abruptly and continued her busy work.
During this process, she also contemplated her own situation.
If we still can't find him, I might end up digesting some of my Affliction potion...

Well, after dealing with the Mirror Person Nikila, I've already digested a bit. The first rule of the Demoness of Affliction's acting principle is quite easy to summarize: Bring pain to the target, not just physical, but also mental.
The second acting principle should be closely related to oneself. ls pain the foundation of a Demoness?
I should strive to summarize all the acting principles soon, digest the potion quickly. Lumian is already preparing for the ritual to advance to Sequence 4 Iron-blooded Knight, I can't let him leave me too far behind...
Just as she thought of this, Franca felt the wind at the open window pause for a second.
Then, Jenna's figure quickly materialized.
This newly advanced Demoness of Pleasure hadn't made herself ugly through makeup techniques, but had adjusted the "direction" of her charm's diffusion- she wore a black robe, concealing her attractive figure. At the same time, she used makeup to give her skin a sickly pale look, as if she hadn't seen sunlight for a long time. Her lips were painted very red, forming a stark contrast with her skin...
This made Jenna look more like a Vampire, with her charm mainly concentrated on the intricateness of her features and overall beauty, rather than sexual attraction.
So it can be done this way... Not bad, Vampire Jenna is beautiful too... Franca smiled as she examined her for a few moments until Jenna hesitated for a moment before asking, "What important intelligence did you obtain?"
Franca sat back in the armchair, crossed her legs, and explained the Harrison situation in detail.
Jenna, already seated in the single sofa, wasn't as excited as Franca, after all, she knew too little to experience that deep and complex emotion.
She pondered for a moment and said, "At this point in time, Harrison is suspected to be cooperating with the Mirror People... Is this also part of the vortex?"
"It's possible." Franca nodded heavily and mumbled, "Why hasn't Lumian arrived yet?"
"He went out," Jenna paused before saying, "Probably."
Franca blurted out in surprise, "How do you know?"
Jenna smiled and answered, "He told me yesterday that his first step in taming Ludwig was to assign him homework related to food, which required Ludwig to go out and complete on his own. Hmm... according to you, it's like creating a food guide for Trier Meat Pie."

"Gradually ramping up the gaslighting, huh..." Franca muttered, "Did you discuss this when you left yesterday? He plans to follow Ludwig?"
"He's afraid Ludwig might converge with other believers of the Devouring Whirlpool, and Lugano is only Sequence 7, unable to stop it." Jenna first briefly explained Lumian's concerns, then her eyes flickered slightly as she said, "This should only be one of the reasons."
"Are there other reasons?" Franca tucked her hair and tried to understand the Hunter's countless hidden intentions.
A smile appeared on Jenna's face.
"Yes, although he didn't say it, that's what I think. His hidden purpose should be to engage in his favorite activity: Fishing!"
Franca was enlightened. "Using Ludwig to fish for other believers of the Devouring Whirlpool?"
Jenna nodded and further added, "Judging from the style of Overseer Perle, no matter what plans the Brokers make, they will most likely gather different forces and people through covert transactions, maximizing the advantages of their own pathway. So, there's a good chance that believers of the Devouring Whirlpool and other heretics have been brought onto the vortex plan.
"If we can catch higher-level believers of the Devouring Whirlpool, we might be able to further understand the situation of the vortex matter and discover its key points."
Franca inwardly hissed. "This is Lumian's style, on the surface he's training Ludwig, but in reality, he's fishing for heretics, investigating the vortex matter.
The most infuriating thing is, his surface goal is indeed very real and important!"
After this exclamation, Franca looked at Jenna and praised with a smile, "You're getting smarter and smarter!"
"Dammit, when you suddenly praise me like this, I don't know whether to accept it gracefully or be modest. If it were Lumian, he would definitely say 'You've barely caught up to my train of thought'." The latter half of Jenna's sentence imitated Lumian's tone.
Franca pondered for a moment, her lips slowly curling into a smile.
"Fishing is indeed a good method.
"We can use the same approach to find Harrison.
"Harrison has a deep understanding and very sinister application of death, and is also looking for scenarios closely related to death, darkness, dusk, and other such powers. Does this mean he can be converged by Beyonders of these pathways?

"This could be convergence from high-ranking individuals, and should also include certain special convergences, such as the Underworld Daoist seal on Lumian, or the Samaritan Women's Spring. Hmm, Amandina's power comes directly from the Underworld Daoist, and the Underworld Daoist seems to possess powers of death, darkness, and dusk simultaneously. Amandina might be able to converge on Harrison as well..."

At this point, Franca's eyes became exceptionally bright.

"I choose all of the above!

"Once Lumian's condition stabilizes, we'll have him take Amandina to the Samaritan Women's Spring to meet the Underworld Daoist. We'll ambush nearby to see if Harrison will converge!"

...

Quartier de la Republic, Rue Richelieu.

Standing in the shadows at the side of the street, Lumian rubbed his nose, feeling as if aromantic scent still lingered.

The emotions and desires he had accumulated since becoming an Ascetic were finally released to a large extent through last night's events, making his condition quite good.

But his mood was very heavy, stemming both from feeling torn and guilty, as well as concern for others' feelings.

True "pleasure" indeed makes one want to indulge, hmm, just want to, but it really does bring pain... Dammit, I'll go back and mock Jenna harshly to vent these emotions... Lumian exhaled slowly, turning his gaze towards Ludwig, who was savoring a red fish hot beef pie not far away.

Chapter 849: Intercontinental Travel

Ludwig had finished eating the red fish hot beef pie in his hand. He squatted in front of a street bench, took out a pen and a notebook from his red hard book bag, and began writing his post-meal impressions with focus and seriousness.

Watching in the shadows, Lumian pursed his lips.

You say you're afraid, but your body instinctively repeats the habits formed in the Church of Knowledge...

If there weren't so many exams and studies, you might have become a qualified believer of the God of Knowledge and Wisdom...

While mocking Ludwig, Lumian surveyed the surrounding citizens. His gaze passed over a young man quietly reading a book in the café across the street, over a middle-aged scholar standing at the intersection observing passersby and carriages without crossing, and landed on a painter who had set up his easel under an Intis parasol tree, blankly painting the street scene.

Lumian left the shadows, walked a few steps, and came to stand behind the painter, peering at his work like the previous passersby.

The painting was ordinary, and he didn't detect any supernatural powers.

Lumian continued walking, inwardly sighing, It seems to be a normal painter for now, just with a somewhat off mental state...

Is this what Trier's painters are like? Sometimes they seem more like heretics than actual heretics...

Sigh, in Trier, it's too difficult to identify heretics based on behavioral abnormalities. As Franca would say, many citizens' mental states are quite beautiful... In this matter, Fourth Epoch Trier and the overall seal are half responsible, and they themselves are responsible for the other half...

As Lumian was thinking, he saw a completely naked man walking towards him, with the only piece of cloth on him being a black top hat positioned in front of his lower abdomen.

This man walked with his head held high, looking around proudly, not at all embarrassed by his current appearance, as if he had done something very worthy of pride.

After passing Lumian by seven or eight meters, his palm was suddenly scalded.

He instinctively withdrew his hand and saw that his black top hat had burst into bright red flames, slowly falling to the ground.

He lost his last piece of cover.

Lumian, his back to him as he continued forward, silently moved his lips.

You're welcome, just letting you show off more thoroughly.
You dare to streak with just that little bit? Next time, I'll send you to the New City of Silver for a free tour.
Lumian walked on with his hands in his pockets, stepping into the shadows, and turned his attention back to Ludwig.
He had been following for a long time but still hadn't found anyone suspicious of being a Devouring Whirlpool believer.
However, considering that since knowing Ludwig, the little boy had never converged with heretics of the same pathway, Lumian suspected that the seal on him must have some restrictions on this. Otherwise, with an evil deity's Angel running around everywhere, who knows how many mystical disasters would have been triggered by now.
There might be another reason. Many evil deities' bestowed, even if they've gained godhood, can disguise themselves as normal humans as long as they haven't lost control or gone half-mad. But those of the Devouring Whirlpool might not be able to. Ludwig, not yet recovered to Depriver, can already eat so much in one meal. The corresponding Sequence 4 demigod, even without letting loose their appetite, would surely have an eating capacity that would alarm the Purifiers and Machinery Hivemind...
Forget it, the main purpose is to 'tame' Ludwig anyway. Fishing out other believers of the Devouring Whirlpool is just an additional idea. It doesn't matter if I don't find any... Lumian had been watching for so long but hadn't found any citizens with problematic eating behaviors.
...
After receiving Franca's second letter, Lumian arrived at Apartment 702, 9 Rue Orosai after dinner.
Jenna had arrived two or three minutes earlier, still wearing Vampire makeup and dressed in an old-fashioned, conservative black robe.
Lumian glanced at Jenna, opened his mouth, then closed it again.
Seeing this, Jenna immediately raised her chin slightly and said, "Were you going to mock my current appearance?"
Lumian chuckled and said, "I just recalled a joke. Once there was a duke who, in order to whiten his skin, followed the advice of a quack doctor and took arsenic-containing pills for a long time. He did successfully improve his complexion, but he also experienced a side effect-he died."
"Where did you read that joke?" Jenna asked curiously.
"In Ghost Face. Not long before I saw that joke, a guest at the Auberge du Coq Doré told me you can make your face look rosy and healthy by slapping your cheeks, to help find a job more easily."

Lumian laughed. "You coarse-haired folks need to read more books and magazines. Don't be illiterate, or you'll be looked down upon by the clergy of the Church of Knowledge."
I just wanted you to act normal and wait for an opportunity, not keep mocking...
Jenna suddenly felt an urge to grind her teeth.
"Do you think I'm like you? Having not even finished compulsory education..."
At this point, Jenna trailed off.
Meanwhile, Franca, who had been furtively writing something at the coffee table, stood up and said, "You two, don't lose sight of the important matters."
Lumian, who already knew from the second letter about Harrison the visitor from Resurrection Island reappearing and Franca wanting to quickly take Amandina to the edge of the Samaritan Women's Spring area, nodded gently and said, "My condition has basically recovered."
"That was fast..." Franca was a bit surprised.
Jenna's gaze briefly shifted away before returning to Lumian as she nodded slightly and said, "Indeed, faster than I expected."
Lumian tsked. "Isn't that a good thing? We can ask Amandina about her thoughts right now."
"Mm-hmm." Franca excitedly moved to take out the Ice Amulet.
Before coming over, Lumian had already burned the independent space containing Black Tear for over half an hour. He took out this Grade 1 Sealed Artifact Level 1.
"Let's use this. lt won't consume any charges."
As he spoke, his gaze swept across the full-length mirror in the living room, the glass windows revealing the night, and the metal-surfaced decorations.
Using Black Tear's mirror magic, he found no abnormalities in these reflective objects and didn't sense any gazes directed at them from within.
He then tossed Black Tear to Franca, giving a slight nod to indicate that the Demoness of Black likely wasn't watching them at the moment.
"I've written down everything I want to tell Amandina to prevent eavesdropping..." Franca put on Black Tear, held the letter paper in her hand, covered it with black flames, and pressed it into the glass surface of the full-length mirror in the living room.
She needed to act quickly and finish this before Black Tear's negative effects took hold!
...
South Continent, Matani, Port Pylos.

Amandina lit the gas wall lamp and sat at her desk, once again reading the mysticism materials provided by Ms. Franca.
Each time she read this knowledge, she was genuinely surprised, respectful, longing, and fearful.
Over the past two to three weeks, she had met with her acquaintances from the patrol team several times and attended two mystical studies gatherings. She discovered that the mysticism knowledge recorded in these materials was actually unknown to the vast majority of Beyonders, whether official or not.
This is truly a gift... Just as Amandina had this thought, she saw the dressing mirror given to her by Ms. Franca, which she had specially placed nearby, become dark and ripple with an aqueous light.
Within the aqueous light, Intisian characters were outlined: "Lam Franca. Lumian has returned.
"He asked me to inquire when you plan to come to Trier. He will take you to the area where that shadow might appear..."
Louis Berry has returned to Trier... Amandina thought for a few seconds, then said to the mirror, "Tonight works."
She had originally planned not to see anyone tonight, to focus on studying the remaining mysticism knowledge.
She had already instructed her maid in advance and locked her bedroom door.
As soon as Amandina gave her answer, Franca's slightly urgent voice came from the mirror.
"Put your hand on the mirror."
Feeling a bit nervous yet quite excited and curious, Amandina reached her palm towards the surface of the dressing mirror.
She felt the hard, cold glass lose its solid feel, like a layer of water without temperature.
Amandina's right hand passed completely through the glass surface, and suddenly a terrifying suction force erupted from within.
Her entire body was yanked in, falling into a dark, empty tunnel, plummeting towards the end of a vortex.
Before Amandina could react, she felt dizzy and disoriented.
When she regained her senses, she found herself standing in a small living room, facing Ms. Franca whom she had met before.
This lady was as beautiful as last time, and with the closer distance and no mirror barrier, her charm was clearly stronger, making even Amandina, a woman, feel a bit embarrassed to look too much but unable to resist.
As Amandina's gaze moved, she saw a beautiful woman with pale

skin and bright red lips who looked more girlish, and Lumian Lee sitting in an armchair, wearing a shirt and jacket, with his right foot crossed over his left leg.
Are all the women around this guy so beautiful? He seems to have become a bit more handsome... Amandina suddenly felt a little insecure about her own appearance.
She then looked around, examining this unfamiliar place.
Meanwhile, Franca quickly removed Black Tear and tossed it back to Lumian.
How amazing... Amandina finally came to her senses and asked with sparkling eyes, "Did I come here through the mirror? Is this Trier?"
Lumian tucked Black Tear back into that separate space in the Traveler's Bag and smiled as he corrected, "It was through the mirror world."
"Mirror world..." Amandina pondered this term, "Then, do I have a way to travel to different places through the mirror world like you?"
Lumian scoffed. "Don't you know that non-adjacent pathways can't be interchanged? Don't you know about the existence of mystical items?"
As he spoke, Lumian stood up and walked towards the door. "We're leaving now."
"Aren't they coming?" Amandina pointed at Franca and Jenna.
She hadn't even had a chance to exchange pleasantries yet!
"No need." Lumian opened the front door.

Chapter 850: Slow and Steady Wins the Race

Inside a four-wheeled, four-seater carriage.

Amandina sat across from Lumian, excitedly looking out at the Intis parasol trees along the road, the still brightly lit shops, the magnificent arcaded streets, gentlemen and ladies walking their turtles, and some citizens in strange attire.

She sincerely praised, "Trier truly lives up to its reputation. It's even more wonderful than I imagined."

"I hope you won't take back that assessment after staying here for a while," Lumian wanted to make a sarcastic remark, but there were so many things worth mocking about Trier that he couldn't find the most representative one at the moment, so he could only respond to Amandina in this way.

Amandina turned her gaze away from the carriage window, saying with some regret, "It's a pity I have to return to Port Pylos at dawn."

She planned to apply for entrance exams to some universities in Trier after graduating from grammar school.

Amandina glanced at the coachman's seat in front, and lowered her voice to ask Lumian, "Why don't we just... just teleport there directly?"

Lumian smiled leisurely.

"You're a guest. Of course I should show you around Trier."

Amandina scrutinized Lumian for a moment.

"I feel like you're deceiving me."

"Your feeling is not wrong." Lumian laughed without concealing anything. "Going slowly allows the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence to take effect."

If he had teleported with Amandina to the entrance of the underground catacombs and rushed to the Samaritan Women's Spring at the fastest speed to complete what needed to be done, Harrison, the visitor from Resurrection Island, might not have reacted in time, might not have been affected by the law of convergence, and might not have made the decision to sneak into the Samaritan Women's Spring again at night. Everything would have ended without achieving the expected goal.

He had to leave enough time for the Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence to take effect!

Sometimes, slow and steady wins the race.

"What... what are you trying to converge with?" Amandina, having witnessed Lumian's performance during the Dream Festival, became nervous all of a sudden.

"A target I'm currently tracking," Lumian leaned back against the

carriage wall and answered with a smile. "Don't worry, your safety is absolutely guaranteed."
Hearing this, Amandina quietly breathed a sigh of relief.
Louis Berry was indeed a trustworthy person; he had fulfilled all the promises he made.
What she didn't know was that if Franca or Jenna were here, they would definitely ask in return, "Is only safety guaranteed? Won't there be any injuries, torture, or impacts on the mind and spirit during the process?"
Amandina glanced at the coachman's seat again through the carriage wall and said softly, "Aren't you afraid the coachman will overhear what you're saying?"
You weren't lowering your voice at all just now!
Lumian chuckled.
"He can't hear us."
Amandina was stunned for a moment, trying to understand with her mysticism knowledge.
"Did you... did you quickly create a wall of spirituality?"
"You can think of it that way," Lumian couldn't be bothered to explain to Amandina what a Bottle of Fiction was.
Amandina relaxed and asked with a smile, "Are those two ladies just now your lovers?"
Lumian let out a derisive snort.
"Shouldn't you ask that question in front of them?"
"That would be so embarrassing! They would definitely get angry!"
Amandina's emotional intelligence was quite good.
"And I wouldn't get angry?" Lumian asked amusedly.
Amandina giggled.
"You don't seem like someone who would get angry over something like this."
She suddenly pointed out the window.
"Is that the Trier Normal University?"
"Your technique for changing the subject is quite clumsy," Lumian mocked Amandina without mercy.
And so, the four-wheeled, four-seater rental carriage arrived at Place du Purgatoire at a normal speed.
As Lumian descended the stairs, he took out a white candle and tossed it to Amandina, telling her about the various taboos inside the underground catacombs.
Amandina listened very carefully and lit one of the candles by rubbing it with spirituality.
"I've seen some of these in magazines, but never as detailed as what you've told me today.
"Do these taboos really have to be followed? What happens if

they're not followed? For example, what if I hadn't lit a candle?"
As they spoke, the two had already arrived at the giant stone archway inscribed with the warning "Stop! The Death Empire lies ahead!"
The catacombs administrator behind the door, with graying hair and wearing a blue vest and yellow trousers, glanced at Lumian but did not stop the two from entering the underground catacombs at night.
Lumian looked straight ahead, walking forward through the piles of skeletons along the sides of the path, and said in a calm tone, "In that case, you would disappear from this world. Your parents would forget they had such a daughter, your former fiancé would forget he once had such a fiancée, your friends would forget you, your servants would forget you, and perhaps only I would remember you."
Although Amandina was a Beyonder equivalent to Sequence 7 and had witnessed some of the tragedies that occurred during the Dream Festival, and her former fiancé was particularly skilled at summoning the dead, being in the underground catacombs-a gloomy, dark place full of skeletons and permeated with the aura of death-she couldn't help but feel a bit frightened and uneasy.
This, combined with Lumian's explanation, made the hair on the back of her neck stand up, and she gripped the white candle even tighter.
"The first time I entered the underground catacombs, I thought this was truly a perfect place for telling horror stories. Unfortunately, until now, such opportunities have been rare." A smile appeared on Lumian's face.
Amandina was stunned for a moment. "Were you just telling a horror story?"
"Yes, and the most terrifying part of this horror story is that every word of it is true," Lumian replied with a smile.
"_." Amandina was scared once again.
She quickened her pace, afraid of being left behind by Lumian.
As the two made their way to the fourth level of the underground catacombs, there were no shortage of skeletons suddenly moving, trying to trip Amandina, nearly causing the young lady to cry out in alarm.
Finally, Lumian led Amandina to the huge, decaying, and mottled tomb chamber that housed the Samaritan Women's Spring.
He looked left and right and silently said to himself, We didn't encounter the shadow resembling Krismona this time... Was She wandering around the fourth level of the catacombs before to find a female Demoness, and no longer has such an obsession after

achieving Her goal?
Lumian shifted his gaze back and tossed a mirror to Amandina.
"Hold this and wait for me here."
"Wait here?" Amandina looked around, slightly panicked.
The surroundings were pitch black, with numerous tombs, decaying and dilapidated, with unknown things lurking in the shadows.
"It'll be quick," Lumian didn't offer any comfort, but went straight through the half-open stone door into the tomb chamber.
After walking a few steps, he encountered the deeply wrinkled catacombs administrator who looked more like a corpse than a living person.
The elderly administrator, also wearing a blue vest and yellow trousers, did not stop Lumian but stood silently in place, allowing him to pass.
After reaching the gentle downward slope, Lumian took out a mirror and the Black Tear accessory that had been burned for over half an hour from the Traveler's Bag.
Outside the huge tomb chamber, Amandina saw Lumian's face appear on the surface of the mirror by the yellowish light of the white candle, and heard his voice.
"Press your hand against the mirror."
With experience, Amandina quickly pressed her hand holding the white candle against the mirror surface.
Again, she passed through the familiar cold water flow, experienced the familiar terrifying suction force and weightless falling sensation, and soon found herself appearing beside Lumian.
Lumian put away the Black Tear and the mirror, pointing to the depths of the slope. "It's down there."
...
In the gap between two ancient tomb chambers, twenty to thirty meters away from the huge tomb chamber housing the Samaritan Women's Spring.
Franca, holding a white candle, carefully peeked out and glanced towards the target location.
She then withdrew and muttered to Jenna, "This candle is really annoying. We can't hide well at all. How are we supposed to ambush Harrison like this?"
The dim yellow light of the white candle was quite conspicuous in the deep, pure darkness.
Jenna looked at Franca and smiled. "It works both ways. Harrison also can't approach silently without us noticing. Besides, hiding in this corner can effectively reduce the impact of the candlelight. It

won't travel that far."
Franca knew all this and was just complaining casually.
She suddenly remembered something and asked with a twitching corner of her mouth, "Have you seen Anthony?"
"Uh..." Jenna was also stunned.
At this moment, Anthony's voice came from outside the gap.
"I've been here all along."
Along with his voice, Franca and Jenna finally saw their companion.
He was standing openly on the path outside, holding a lit white candle, and the two Demonesses hadn't noticed him before.
"Psychological Invisibility is really great..." Franca praised enviously.
Psychological Invisibility worked on a completely different principle from other invisibility abilities. lt mainly involved placing oneself in the psychological blind spots and cognitive dead angles of the surrounding people, making them ignore the situation here. Therefore, whether Anthony was holding a lit candle or not did not affect his ability to become invisible.
Anthony simply replied, "Candlelight is a powerful attention-drawing element here. It also reduces the effectiveness of my Psychological Invisibility. I need to be very focused to maintain it."
Franca and Jenna stopped talking and hid in the gap between the tomb chambers, listening to the sounds around them.
...
In front of the faintly contracting and expanding thin grayish-white fog.
Lumian once again examined his own state.
That cold emanating from within his heart occupied his body, causing most of his emotions and desires to wither, but the malice and irritability resulting from the negative effects of the contract still existed and were growing stronger.
He was in a very good state now, having endured without much reliance on the abilities of the Ascetic.
Amandina had a similar reaction, one side of her face turning deathly pale from the "freeze", while she gritted her teeth to prevent an unfamiliar version of herself from emerging.
Lumian grabbed her arm and extended his left palm holding the white candle towards the grayish-white fog.
As his chest warmed, the two successfully walked into the mist.
Everything became even more silent.

Chapter 851: A Marvelous Experience

Lumian let go of her hand, pressed his left chest, silently praised Mr. Fool, then led Amandina towards the bottom of the slope through the grayish-white fog.

The further Amandina walked, the more uncomfortable she became with her current state. The icy coldness emanating from within made her feel as if she had already died and become a corpse, while it seemed like another version of herself inside her body was trying to tear its way out.

"Shall we... go back?" she hesitantly said to Lumian.

"We're almost at our destination," Lumian pointed in the direction where the faint, illusory sound of water could barely be heard, then added, "If you really decide to go back now, I can fulfill your request."

Amandina hesitated for a few seconds. "We're already at the edge..."

Wouldn't it be a waste to go back now?

Lumian chuckled. "Don't worry, if it really gets to the point where we can't bear it, I'll definitely run faster than you."

"You saying that makes me even more worried..." Amandina replied softly.

Lumian continued forward, thinking for a moment before saying, "When I tell you to close your eyes, close them. When I tell you to open them, open them immediately."

"Alright." In such an environment, Amandina could only choose to trust Lumian.

Soon, the gray fog in front of them became very thin, revealing a spring the size of a pond.

Pale-white water flowed in the spring, surrounded by deep, dark objects of indescribable color.

Amandina saw a wet, seaweed-like black hair floating in the water, and at the bottom, there seemed to be multiple faint figures hidden, struggling as if they had just drowned and were trying to crawl out.

At the same time, she noticed a lady wandering beside the spring water, wearing a white robe, with black hair, exquisitely perfect features, and a holy aura that seemed out of place in the catacombs.

Amandina was immediately attracted, and if it weren't for the lady's blank and cold gaze, lacking necessary charm, and if the spring water hadn't suddenly retracted into a pitch-black hole that light couldn't penetrate, she might have been unable to pull herself away.

Lumian also saw Krismona's figure, and several thoughts flashed through his mind, I could bring Jenna here to meet Amandina directly, without having to wait until an advancement every time...
The Krismona here is more like a wandering ghost, bound to the area around the Samaritan Women's Spring. Whether she can communicate normally, whether she would indiscriminately attack approaching Demonesses, whether this would cause any abnormalities, is still unknown...
I need to find a way to confirm before bringing Jenna in...
Seeing that Krismona's shadow didn't even glance at him, Lumian turned his head to Amandina and said, "You can close your eyes now."
"Okay." Amandina felt a certain fear and obediently closed her eyes.
Lumian then took two steps forward, reaching the edge of the Samaritan Women's Spring.
The next second, Amandina heard the sound of gushing spring water and felt a violent, frenzied aura descend upon her.
She couldn't help but tremble, her knees weakening.
At the same time, she had hallucinations, believing that multiple figures were approaching her, each extremely terrifying-the kind that would cause nightmares if seen and lead to a tragic death if encountered.
Amandina cried out in fear, "Let's go back! I want to go back!"
As she screamed, the violent and frenzied aura subsided, and the multiple figures in her hallucination retreated.
She heard Lumian's deep voice in her ear. "You can open your eyes now."
Amandina broke free from the extreme fear, relaxing a little.
She didn't hesitate and opened her eyes.
She saw that familiar figure, wearing a strange, rust-spotted iron crown, skin as crystalline as jade, with a white beard gently floating, already quite elderly.
At this moment, the old man's figure was sitting cross-legged at the deep hole, which was violently shaking as if some unknown entity was trying to squeeze out.
Amandina's gaze fell on those deep eyes that seemed like the night sky.
Her thoughts suddenly became blurred, as if she saw a rotting, pus-oozing hand with strange feathers reaching out and pressing on her head.
She also heard an old, blank, cold, and hollow voice ringing in her ear.

But she couldn't understand what the voice was saying.
After an unknown amount of time, Amandina came to her senses. The old man's figure was no longer in her sight, only the dark soil that had lost the pale-white spring water, and Lumian crouching beside the spring, holding a small golden bottle to collect the seeping water droplets.
Of course, Lumian and the others had reported Amandina's situation to the Major Arcana card holders before daring to bring her into the area around the Samaritan Women's Spring, and Madam Magician had also asked him to collect some more spring water.
"What's the use of this water?" Amandina, no longer so nervous and scared, asked curiously.
"If you make your enemy drink it, they will die instantly," Lumian patronizingly replied.
Amandina's eyes lit up, but she asked in confusion, "But how can I make my enemy drink it..."
Lumian put away the small golden bottle, stood up and said, "What did you see just now? What did you experience?"
Amandina recalled and recounted all the details, then self-examined.
"But I couldn't understand what was being said, the pronunciation was %¥...
"It seems like I've gained a new ability, I can placate souls, calm emotions and desires..."
Lumian carefully remembered the few pronunciations Amandina had relayed, walked back to the young lady's side and said, "You've received a new boon, Soul Assurer."
"Yes." Amandina smiled, "I feel like my body has even changed a little..."
Lumian chuckled.
"Maybe you'll slowly grow a white beard, develop wrinkles. I've heard that boons gradually make the blessed ones resemble the high-level beings who granted them power, both mentally and physically."
Amandina was startled. "Can I... not have that?"
"Try consuming corresponding pathway potions to see if it can counteract it," Lumian said as he passed by Amandina and walked up the slope leading to the tomb chamber.
Amandina followed closely behind, lost in thought.
...
Even until Lumian and Amandina left the underground catacombs, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony had not encountered Harrison, the visitor from Resurrection Island.

"He didn't show up?" Franca frowned and said, "Was my deduction wrong? Is relying on the traits of characteristics alone not enough to achieve such powerful convergence? Or is it that only Angel-level high-sequence Beyonders can actively utilize the law of convergence?"
Jenna's eyes shifted slightly as she thought for a moment before saying, "Maybe Harrison can sense this deliberate convergence and actively avoided it...
Maybe, maybe he's not from the Death, Darkness, or Twilight pathways. He has a deep understanding of death and is pursuing corresponding things and scenes, but that doesn't mean he's a Beyonder of these pathways. What if he's a scholar studying death?"
"It's possible." Franca sighed, "Let's wait five more minutes, then we'll go after Lumian and Amandina."
...
Even until they all gathered at 9 Rue Orosai Apartment 702, Harrison from Resurrection Island still hadn't appeared.
"Thank you all, I can provide help for you now," Amandina said, looking at Franca.
Franca looked at the young girl who appeared somewhat tired from her terrifying experience and smiled, saying, "There's no rush. You should go back first. Once you've adapted to your newly gained power and regained your body's balance, we'll come again.
"Besides, it's quite convenient to travel from Port Pylos to Trier."
How is it convenient? Without using the mirror world or teleportation, it might take two or three months to arrive... Amandina grumbled silently, but accepted Franca's suggestion.
Then, she was sent back by Lumian and the others using Black Tear to the mirror Franca had given her, and she emerged from it.
At this moment, it was still night outside, with servants occasionally passing by in the corridor.
Looking at her familiar bedroom, at the fountain pen on the desk and the pile of books, Amandina suddenly felt as if she had been away for many days and experienced too many things.
But it had only been half a night.
In this half night, she had completed a round trip using the mirror world, toured the prosperous Trier that was farther than any distant place, explored the underground catacombs featured in magazines, and witnessed the terrifying area around the Samaritan Women's Spring.
After savoring the experience for a while, Amandina sincerely sighed.
"How amazing... A marvelous journey..."

...
Inside Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai.
Lumian tried to repeat the sounds Amandina had heard.
Franca listened intently, hesitating before saying, "It seems to be... 'Be careful, Penglai'..."
"Be careful of Penglai? The Penglai divine mountain mentioned by the Armored Shadow? This doesn't have much practical meaning for us..." Lumian said thoughtfully.
Jenna and Anthony both nodded.
"Indeed." Franca quickly adjusted her mindset, "But we've at least achieved one of our goals. In a few days, we can bring Amandina to summon Armored Shadow!"
At that time, she planned to first try asking if it could understand the meaning of the text on Mr. Star's information.
Just thinking about it was quite exciting!
After chatting idly for a while, Anthony, seeing that it was getting late, bid farewell and left to return to his own home.
Jenna looked at Franca pacing back and forth, then turned to Lumian and quietly pointed at herself.
Lumian slowly shook his head and pointed at himself.
After exchanging glances several times, Jenna, wearing her Vampire makeup, pursed her lips and said to Franca, "I'll make a move first."
"Mm." Franca didn't say much, as she wanted to talk to Lumian alone about those ancient texts and the Curly-Haired Baboons Research Society.
After Jenna left, she sat down in the armchair and comfortably stretched her limbs.
She glanced at Lumian and asked curiously, "Why don't you sit down?"
Lumian looked at Franca, unable to hold back another sigh. "I have something to tell you."
Franca scrutinized Lumian's expression suspiciously.
"Are you playing a prank? You're the type of person who would warn everyone in a joking tone even if a disaster was about to happen. No, you're... you're serious? Is it something very serious?"
Lumian had already used Black Tear to sense the various mirrors in the room, roughly confirming that the Demoness of Black wasn't watching.
He looked at Franca, instinctively wanting to force a smile to make himself seem a bit more relaxed, but he couldn't manage it.
Franca unconsciously sat up straight.
Lumian spoke in a low voice, "Jenna asked me to help her digest the Pleasure potion."

Chapter 852: Two Choices

Franca was initially stunned, then her expression turned to one of obvious shock.

She opened her mouth, instinctively wanting to say something, but her red lips quivered uncontrollably.

Her face gradually turned pale, and her eyes flickered between emptiness and confusion.

Lumian quietly watched Franca without saying a word.

After a while, Franca asked hoarsely and with difficulty, "You agreed?"

Her voice sounded like it was being squeezed out of her throat, her eyes holding a glimmer of hope.

Lumian nodded slowly.

The light in Franca's eyes dimmed instantly.

She lowered her head bit by bit, staring at her legs resting on the armchair.

After a few seconds, she muttered as if in a dream, "I knew... Jenna's affection and regard for me were never love. I was just fantasizing... Fantasizing that she couldn't find anyone suitable to help digest the Pleasure potion and had to reluctantly choose me. And maybe, over time, physical entanglement would lead to emotional closeness...

"I knew... Jenna was in a hurry to digest the potion because her brother would soon return to Trier...

"I knew... the female Demoness path is very dangerous. Jenna is very aware of this too...

"I knew... her sexual orientation is men...

"I knew... she's decisive and good at making bold moves...

"lL... Lean accept Jenna choosing someone else. I can accept... accept that she likes someone else. She's free. She's independent. She's not my appendage. Just because I like her doesn't mean she must like me or can't get close to others... I've been mentally preparing myself for this, even comforting myself that maybe this could help me digest the Affliction potion...

"But, but..."

Franca suddenly looked up, her eyes burning with anger. "Why you? Damn it, why you?"

Lumian felt like he was being stared at by a beautiful yet dangerous leopard, but he remained silent.

The answer didn't need to be spoken. It had already been spoken.

Franca and Lumian locked eyes, her gaze gradually turning sorrowful.

She laughed at herself bitterly, then asked in frustration and

anger, "Why did you agree?"
"For two reasons: one superficial and one real. Which do you want to hear?"
Lumian replied with a bitter smile.
"I want to hear both!" Franca said without hesitation, her voice firm.
She stood up, trying to make herself appear more imposing.
Lumian sighed and said, "The superficial reason is that Jenna had already come to me. Whether I refused or avoided her, it would hurt her, affect her state, and leave hidden dangers. If I agreed to help her, it would hurt you. I had to choose the option where the aftermath was relatively easier to deal with. You are optimistic and have a good nature; you should be able to gradually let go..."
"Dammit! So because I have a good nature, I deserve to be bullied?" Franca interrupted angrily, laughing bitterly.
She walked to the window, placing her hands on the window frame, staring at the night outside as if to calm herself down.
Lumian came up beside her, also gazing into the deep night.
After a few seconds, without turning her head, Franca asked, as if talking to herself, "And the real reason?"
Lumian was silent for a moment before saying, "From the moment you didn't want to lose your image in front of someone you truly loved-at the moment you began digesting the Pleasure potion-and Jenna took the initiative to approach you, your relationship entered a vortex, spiraling downward, and sooner or later it would erupt. The longer it dragged on, the more hurtful and severe the consequences. It's better to have a conclusion sooner.
"For me, the optimal choice in this matter would actually be to delay until preparations for the Iron-blooded Knight advancement ritual were complete. If things went smoothly, that would only be a matter of three or four weeks. By then, I would have gained godhood, becoming a demigod of Sequence 4.
Whatever emotional issues you two had, it wouldn't affect me even if it completely shattered our team's harmony and unity.
"Even if the subsequent Sequence 3 also required a team, I would have enough time to reorganize."
Franca listened quietly, then turned her head to look at Lumian's face. "And your emotions?"
Lumian gazed into the darkness outside, remaining silent.
Franca followed suit, remaining silent for a while before saying expressionlessly, "You should go now. I'm a mess. I want some peace."
Lumian hesitated, not moving.
Seeing this, Franca said with a complex smile, "Don't worry, I won't

leave. I still have a mission.
"Why aren't you leaving yet? Do you want me to beat you up?
"Let me tell you, once I figure things out, I might end up like that Demoness in Morora and cut off your manhood! Anyway, you can grow it back; I'll cut it every day!
"Go on, get out!
"Get lost!"
Seeing Franca's emotions gradually intensify and her grabbing something to throw at him, Lumian sighed softly, walked towards the door, opened it, and stepped into the stairwell.
Bang!
The sound of the door slamming shut echoed behind him.
Lumian descended the stairs and soon saw Jenna standing silently in the shadows.
She hadn't really left. She had been waiting quietly in the building, head slightly lowered.
"How did it go?" Jenna raised her head, asking Lumian.
Lumian recounted his conversation with Franca and her reactions, focusing on the key points.
Jenna pursed her lips and said to Lumian, "You should go back. I'll wait outside in case of any accidents."
Lumian glanced back at the dark hallway, then said, "I'll wait here too."
Jenna shook her head. "One person is enough. If she calms down, she might want to talk to me. Your presence might provoke her further."
After a moment of thought, Lumian said, "Okay."
He looked at Jenna's deep eyes, filled with a hint of pain, and sighed, saying, "In this world, most people are selfish most of the time. Like you...
Lumian paused and pointed at himself. "And like me."
Jenna's gaze softened a bit, and she smiled self-deprecatingly. "Sometimes, I really want to drag you into the abyss with me."
...
Returning to his rented apartment, Lumian lay on his bed, staring at the dark ceiling, unable to sleep.
He didn't want to rely on Cogitation to calm himself down either.
After an unknown amount of time, he suddenly had a premonition and sat up abruptly, directing his gaze towards the bedroom window.
With a creak, the window opened, and Franca, wearing a woman's shirt and fitted trousers but sporting fuzzy slippers, jumped in.
In the crimson moonlight, her eyes appeared red, and she held a dagger in her hand.

"Thanks to you, I've digested quite a bit of the Affliction potion!" Franca said through gritted teeth, looking at Lumian sitting on the bed. "Damn it, the more I think about it, the angrier I get!"
Lumian stared at Franca's face for a few seconds, his gaze slowly shifting to the dagger in her hand.
He waited for Franca to continue speaking.
Franca ground her teeth and said, "I can accept Jenna making this choice.
Although I would be sad, sorrowful, and in pain, I am willing to accept it and even encourage her.
"But you, you hurt your bro! You should be cut into pieces for this!
"Do you know how much this hurt me? We were so close, so in sync, always thinking of each other. Why, why did you break this beautiful state?
"You ended up making me feel abandoned, like you two are close and intimate, while I'm left out, the unnecessary one...
"I feel betrayed..."
As she spoke, the gnashing tone in Franca's voice diminished, and a trace of confusion appeared in her voice.
She paused, then threw the dagger, which embedded itself accurately in Lumian's bed.
Franca then took two steps forward, glaring at Lumian.
"You now have two choices!
"One, as I said before, if you dare touch Jenna, I'll make you drink the Witch potion and turn you into a woman. Now, your choice is to switch pathways and become a Demoness of Despair!
"Two, I screw you, or you screw me!"
Lumian had anticipated many possible developments, but he hadn't expected these choices.
Seeing his shocked, bewildered expression, Franca added angrily, "I want to join you two!"
"Wh-" Lumian finally said a word, carefully observing Franca's state.
After speaking, Franca let out a long sigh, revealing her usual smile.
"Let me ask you, do you, uh, care about me?"
"Yes," Lumian answered without hesitation.
Franca nodded in satisfaction. "Do you care about Jenna?"
"Yes," Lumian also didn't hesitate.
Franca pursed her lips and asked further, "Does Jenna care about you?"
"Yes," Lumian had no doubts.
Franca then asked, "Do I care about you?"
"Yes." Lumian nodded solemnly.

Franca continued, "And do I care about Jenna?"
"Very much," Lumian added an adjective.
Franca hesitated and asked again, "And does Jenna care about me?"
"Very much. You're her family and her best friend," Lumian answered seriously.
Franca then raised her hand slightly.
"There you have it! We all care about each other, and we never know when we might die suddenly. So let's stay together. No one abandons anyone. It's just sleeping together. Love is a pain in the ass! To hell with love!"
Lumian was rendered speechless for a moment. He looked at Franca and sincerely remarked, "You look quite beautiful in your current state of mind."
Franca chuckled. "What else would I be doing?"
As she said this, she suddenly half-turned her head and looked to the side, her voice growing louder.
"Should I give up? Should I leave?"
Tears, long in the making, slowly trickled down her cheeks.
Lumian remained silent.
After a few seconds, Franca turned her head back, her gaze deep as she looked at Lumian. In a hoarse voice, she said, "Because in this world, you two are the most important people to me.
"The only two..."
Under the crimson moonlight, her face was already streaked with tears.

Chapter 853: Confession

Seeing the sparkling tears and streaks on Franca's face, Lumian suddenly thought of his sister Aurore. He recalled the loneliness that always emanated from her when she gazed at the stars from the rooftop.

He also remembered the life he and Aurore had depended on each other in Cordu, the excruciating pain when his sister died and Cordu was destroyed, and the self-destructive impulses he had when he first arrived in Trier. Overcoming those emotions and rebuilding his social connections had started with Franca, Jenna, Charlie, and many tenants at the Auberge du Coq Doré.

In this world, there aren't many people I care about anymore... Lumian sighed deeply.

Back in Morora, he had engaged in mutual scheming against Julie, Albus Medici, and the others. Even when facing various dangers and conspiracies, he hadn't sighed as much as he had in the past few days.

He often felt so troubled that he wanted to burn the world down.

Franca's words had struck a chord in him. He already knew what his answer would be, but he wanted to struggle a bit more.

Looking at Franca, Lumian said with a bitter smile, "Caring doesn't have to manifest in that way. Apart from Aurore, you and Jenna are the people I care about most."

Franca shook her head without hesitation. "No way! I would feel resentful, like an outsider!

"You agreed to Jenna, so you have to agree to me too. Once you started this, you can't take it back! You should have realized this when you made that decision. If you don't balance the bowl filled with water, it will spill out!

"As the leader of a team, you must remember three things when dealing with each member: "Fairness! Fairness! And damn fairness!"

"But for this kind of matter..." Lumian responded instinctively, "If Anthony wants to sleep with me, do I have to agree too?"

"You must agree!" Franca walked to the bed and looked down at Lumian sitting there, her voice fierce. "Who told you to sleep with Jenna first, unless Anthony doesn't want to or you consider him a dispensable member of the team!"

Lumian rubbed his temples, feeling a headache coming on.

What kind of strange logic is this...

Why does Franca always have so many bizarre ideas...

Lumian looked at Franca and said with a bitter smile, "Is this how you digested the Instigator potion?"

Before Franca could respond, he sighed again. "I agree."
He added, "But I'm only speaking for myself. You'll have to talk to Jenna about it yourself."
He was referring to the threesome.
Franca's body suddenly swayed, as if she had briefly lost strength.
Her expression slowly relaxed, and she said with a chuckle, "We'll talk about it later. For now, I just want your agreement."
"And Jenna and I..." Lumian initially wanted to say that he and Jenna had only agreed until the Pleasure potion was digested, but he felt it wasn't the right time to say this now.
Franca, looking a bit tired, showed a teasing smile. "You haven't said which choice you agreed to. I'm more looking forward to you becoming a Demoness of Despair, or me screwing you."
"The remaining choice," Lumian answered helplessly.
Franca let out a long breath. "That works too."
She seemed to have lost her hard exterior, looking quite weak.
She waved her hand. "I'll go rest now."
"I thought..." Lumian was slightly surprised.
Franca rolled her eyes at him. "What did you think? I've been so shocked and hurt, feeling down for so long, my emotions and state are all over the place. How could I be in the mood for the deed? You've agreed, so just keep it in mind, and we'll talk about it when I feel better."
My mind and spirit need a break too... Lumian sighed silently.
After watching Franca leave through the window, disappearing into the night outside, Lumian walked to the bedroom door and opened it.
Jenna was quietly sitting in the dark area of the living room.
Lumian wasn't surprised by Jenna's appearance; she had been watching Franca's door, and Franca's intense emotions made it hard not to be noticed or followed when she left.
"I didn't expect it to turn out this way." Lumian sighed to Jenna.
Jenna stood up, smiling. "Although I didn't expect it either, I thought about it for a while and felt like, maybe I could accept it. Just you and her, it's much better than I anticipated."
"What did you anticipate?" Lumian quietly sighed with relief.
Jenna's eyes held a mix of sadness, guilt, and pain as she said, "Franca losing her mind and trying to kill us.
"I would agree but hide for a while, waiting until I have arranged Julien's future before seeing her again."
Lumian looked at Jenna for a few seconds, then sighed.
"Since your mother's death, you've had quite a bit of self-destructive tendencies. We thought we'd completely helped you overcome them, but it turns out a bit still lingered."

Jenna's eyes glistened as she looked at Lumian. "Aren't you the same?"
Lumian met her gaze and after two seconds, couldn't help but laugh. "Is this a support group for the broken?"
"Yes." Jenna pointed to the door. "I'll go talk to Franca. We'll exchange our ailments in a few days."
"Okay." Lumian nodded gently.
...
Inside Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai.
Franca lay back in the armchair, her eyes open, gently rocking with the chair's movement.
Knock! Knock! Knock!
She heard the knocking and realized someone was outside.
In this state, I could easily be assassinated... Franca reflected on herself, stood up, and walked to the door.
She could guess who was outside.
Sure enough, she saw Jenna with her Vampire makeup.
Franca opened her mouth, unsure what to say, and just stepped aside to let Jenna in.
After Jenna sat on the single sofa, she smiled at Franca, who had returned to the armchair.
"I heard your conversation with Lumian."
Franca's face, which had been somewhat pale, quickly turned red.
Embarrassing!
How embarrassing!
So embarrassing she wanted to crawl into a hole!
Jenna laughed softly. "Actually, I also looked forward to those other two choices more."
Franca could only give a sheepish chuckle.
Jenna looked at her seriously. "I can tell there were other thoughts behind that last choice. Can you tell me what they were?"
Franca remained silent for a few seconds before speaking up, "That bastard Lumian must have told you it was only until the Pleasure potion was digested. I know him!"
As she spoke, Franca felt a bit indignant on Jenna's behalf.
Then, she sighed. "If I joined now, in this state, Lumian would definitely feel awkward and not set a time limit. For fairness, he shouldn't propose one to you either."
Jenna closed her eyes briefly, as if being blown by the wind.
She looked at Franca with unusually gentle eyes and said with a bitter smile, "But that's just a false realization. I can't deceive myself."
"False is better than nothing. If it lasts long enough, it might become real," Franca showed a self-mocking smile, "For a long

time, even knowing it's false is better, it helps us digest the potion."
Looking at Jenna, Franca suddenly felt a surge of emotion and had a lot to say, "Maybe I'm a coward. I've liked you for a long time, but I've never dared to truly pursue you or express my feelings. I've always been indecisive about this, retreating every day."
In the current atmosphere, Franca suddenly found it wasn't hard to say the words "I like you."
This unexpected ease made her even sadder.
Jenna looked at Franca without any anger or words.
She could feel that what Franca truly wanted to say was yet to come.
After a brief pause, Franca clenched her teeth and uttered, "I've been hiding something from you. I-I was originally a man."
"I know," Jenna replied calmly, her eyes showing some encouragement, "The Witch potion."
"You did know." Franca wasn't surprised. She mustered her courage and continued, "There's something else. I-I'm not from this world. I transmigrated from another world. I-I took over this body."
Jenna exclaimed in surprise, "Another world?"
A thought suddenly struck her. "The one with the Underworld Daoist and the Celestial Master?"
Having worked together for so long, Franca often forgot whether she had told Jenna about these things, so Jenna knew these terms but didn't understand what they represented, considering them as powerful beings.
"Yes, and also Resurrection Island." After revealing this secret, Franca felt much lighter.
Jenna had a look of sudden realization. "No wonder you were so agitated when you got Harrison's information..."
"So, you understand why I've been eager to summon the Armored Shadow?"
Franca asked nervously, "You, you don't mind that I took someone else's body, do you?"
"Why should I mind? Unless it's the Franca I know being replaced," Jenna responded with amusement, clearly expressing her stance.
Franca relaxed completely, almost collapsing into the armchair.
Jenna thought for a moment and probed, "Lumian's sister and those mysticism gathering attendees with strange codenames, are they from your world too?"
"Yes, but I can't tell you more. I can only talk about my part," Franca said with a sigh. "I used to dream of going home, returning to my world. So every time I had the impulse to step towards you, I couldn't help but ask myself, can you bear her future? When there's a chance to go home, would you stay for her? Taking her to

an unfamiliar world, wouldn't that be too cruel? Would she be willing to go, could she go..."
"Each time I asked those questions, I retreated...
"I was always so conflicted, never taking any real action."
Jenna listened gently, and when Franca finished, she smiled and said, "You're one of the kindest people I've ever met. I'm glad you were with me through the toughest times."
She looked at Franca and hesitated for a moment before asking, "Do you still think about going home now?"
Franca fell silent. The crimson moonlight outside had dimmed at some point.
After a few seconds, Franca answered in a low voice, "Yes."

Chapter 854: Translation

Hearing Franca's answer, Jenna bit her lip and said, "Was that choice you just made also influenced by this factor?"

"Maybe," Franca said with a bitter smile. "I felt that if I didn't do this, there would always be that lingering resentment in my heart. We would definitely grow apart over time. Once the mission is completed, once there's no external force keeping us together, we might just drift apart. But I don't want that..."

"When I left with a dagger just now, I genuinely wanted to castrate Lumian once to vent my anger. But walking in the shadows of the street, the cold wind sobered me up a lot. Then I thought, love is such a nuisance. Without it, the three of us could still be together happily like before.

"With that thought, I suddenly felt that if I could exclude love, and the possessiveness and jealousy it brings, maybe, just maybe, it could work...

"Madam Judgment has always told us that the end is near, coming in a few years or decades. We must prepare ourselves mentally and in terms of strength. Although there are no signs of the apocalypse yet, and we often forget this matter to maintain a good mindset and avoid going mad from stress, we've already experienced two major catastrophes in Trier alone. The Tree of Shadow incident and the Hostel plan, no matter how we try to avoid or ignore them, we can't escape their impact.

"Under such circumstances, any one of us might leave, say goodbye, or die at any time. So why care so much? Although that choice is strange, and even I find it hard to accept, why not give it a try?

"After trying, our future might be better and we'll become closer, even more caring for one another, or it might get worse, gradually drifting apart and becoming familiar strangers or even enemies. But how will we know the result without trying? It won't get much worse anyway.

"Of course, human emotions are uncontrollable. Even if our future gets better, the hidden love and possessiveness and jealousy it brings can't be completely eliminated. Pain and pleasure will coexist for a long time. Perhaps that's the essence of a Demoness.

"But no matter what, I still like that saying:

"Life is short, why not give it a try?"

Jenna listened intently to Franca's statement, then said with a gentle gaze, "That's why I feel such a strong sense of urgency and sometimes make selfish choices."

She then chuckled."I've heard Lumian tease you with 'Life is short,

why not give it a try'. Was it because you did something strange with that saying in mind?"
Franca smiled awkwardly. "I was quite hesitant and conflicted about drinking the Witch potion. Then someone said that phrase to me."
Jenna understood and, instead of mocking Franca, asked curiously, "Was it also that saying that encouraged you to be with Gardner Martin?"
"Yes... I hadn't met you all then, and I didn't have anyone I particularly cared about," Franca replied even more awkwardly.
Seeing this, Jenna chuckled softly. "Did you ever think about trying it with Lumian?"
"Well..." Franca felt like running away, "Oh, come on, you pure-hearted girl, let's not talk about such inappropriate topics!"
Jenna deliberately swore, "Dammit! The dirty jokes and obscene scenes I heard and saw while singing in bars and dance halls were far more shocking than this. Not just between men and women, even between men and men."
The atmosphere became less sad and heavy, and Jenna stood up.
"You look very tired. Emotional upheaval does that. I'll go back now. Get some rest."
"Okay." Franca stood up as well.
She opened her mouth, seemingly wanting to ask something, but ultimately didn't.
Sensitive to details, Jenna smiled. "Ask whatever you want. You've already made that decision, what else could you hesitate to ask?"
Franca hesitated for a moment, then looked into Jenna's eyes and asked, "If I had told you from the start that I was originally a man, and after spending some time together, genuinely pursued you, would you have fallen for me?"
Jenna thought seriously for a moment, then replied, "I can't answer such a hypothetical question. All I can say is maybe."
She looked back into Franca's eyes, saying, "I've told you before, during that period, you were a light in my life. To me, you were both my best friend and the older sister who always protected me, despite not being related by blood. After my mother died, I even projected some of my feelings for her onto you. Maybe that's why I sometimes thought I shouldn't give you any false hopes and it was better to cut things off early."
Jenna smiled. "In my heart, if I were to rank the three people I care about most, Julien would be first, you second, and Lumian third. Love might fade one day, but the bond we share won't."
Franca felt relieved and said with a smile, "You have a great way with words."

"Of course, I studied hard back then!" Jenna walked towards the door.
After a few steps, she turned back to Franca and hesitated, "I can't accept the idea of joining right now. Just speaking for myself."
She then laughed. "But who knows what the future holds?"
Franca smiled. "It's just a saying."
Jenna turned back to the door, opened it, and held the brass handle, pausing once more. She turned her body and looked at Franca standing in the center of the living room, asking quietly, "If one day you find a way home, and both Lumian and I want you to stay, would you?"
Franca stood with her back to the crimson moonlight, her face hidden in deep shadow.
After a long silence, she answered slowly, "I don't know..."
Her voice seemed to be squeezed out from her heart, light and weak.
...
Two days later, in an underground quarry in Trier.
Franca, Jenna, and Amandina, who had just arrived from Matani in the Southern Continent, stood inside a wall of spirituality, watching Lumian set up an altar.
Anthony, who Amandina hadn't noticed, was responsible for guarding the perimeter.
Lumian calmly completed the preparations, lit the candles, dripped the essential oil, and stepped back two steps, standing next to Franca.
He wasn't worried about the lack of demigod protection. Firstly, Amandina was present. Secondly, when he sent the bottle of Samaria Woman Spring water to Madam Magician, he mentioned this matter.
Seeing the candle flames flicker, Franca suddenly became nervous, while Amandina looked puzzled. She had no idea what she was supposed to help with or could help with.
Once Franca nodded, indicating she was ready, Lumian recited in ancient Hermes, "I!"
Then, switching to Hermes:
"I summon in my name:
"The spirit that wanders about the unfounded, a combination of numerous shadows, Lumian Lee's contracted creature..."
This was a familiar part of the process to Amandina, similar to summoning a messenger. So she didn't pay much attention, curious about the incantation's description while observing Franca, the lady whose name she had just learned, and Lumian's eye interactions, looking for any signs of intimacy.

To her disappointment, Franca, Jenna, and Lumian were all focused on the ritual.
Soon, a blurry shadow in fish-scale armor emerged from the candle flame, its black scales stained with pure gold, appearing solemn and sacred.
The transparent faces on the scales were clearer than before, more twisted and fierce like evil spirits.
They silently screamed, displaying hatred and malice.
Amandina was startled.
It wasn't the appearance of Armored Shadow that scared her; such horror couldn't intimidate someone who had experienced the Dream Festival, summoned Baynfel, and been to the underground catacombs.
What shocked her was Armored Shadow and the ghostly faces on its scales simultaneously looking at her!
She almost stopped breathing, her body enveloped in icy coldness.
Armored Shadow spoke in a strange language.
Only Franca could barely understand it, hearing: "Disciple of the Underworld Gate..."
It really recognizes Amandina's boon... Franca murmured, noticing Armored Shadow's malice had lessened, indicating a more peaceful interaction was possible.
Lumian also noticed the change and quickly had Franca place the 100,000 verl d'or worth of gold on the altar, then spoke in Hermes, "I offer this sacrifice, please complete a simple task and answer two questions."
Armored Shadow conveyed agreement, its scales' transparent faces greedily eyeing the gold.
Lumian immediately placed the documents Franca handed him on the altar.
These weren't the documents Mr. Star gave Franca, nor the original documents.
The former had its order completely scrambled, making it difficult to interpret through a question and answer format, and the latter could corrupt Armored Shadow, leading the ritual to unforeseen dangers.
So, after Franca expressed her intention, Mr. Star provided new documents through Madam Judgment.
The new documents extracted several complete sentences from the original, containing hundreds of frequently used words from the rest of the text.
"The task is to translate these documents." Franca listened to Lumian's request with anticipation and anxiety.
She wasn't sure if Armored Shadow would accept the deal.

With a whooshing sound, the two pages floated up, hovering before Armored Shadow.
After a few seconds, the armored shadow spoke again in an incomprehensible language.
Franca's ears perked up.
"Pure yin does not last, pure yang does not grow, yin contains yang, yang contains yin, the union of yin and yang gives rise to everything, this is the way of heaven..."
That's it? Franca's lips twitched.
Although she hadn't truly done the deed, she suspected Armored Shadow was insinuating something about herself, Jenna, and Lumian.

Chapter 855: That Corpse

To Franca, the sentence Armored Shadow Chen Tu had just translated was quite ordinary. It was something she often read before her transmigration. She couldn't understand why the Major Arcana card holders thought such words could bring corruption.

Could it be the words themselves?

Just like the word "I," which can have entirely different meanings in Intis and ancient Hermes!

However, isn't there a phrase that seems a bit off? Yin and yang unite to create all things... shouldn't it be yin and yang unite to produce all things? Franca had been an avid internet user before her transmigration, and one of her hobbies was reading novels and watching anime. She had only seen "Yin and yang unite to produce all things" and never heard of "Yin and yang unite to create all things."

Of course, after thinking carefully, she found it understandable:

Yin and yang unite to nurture all things, all things grow and weave together to form matter!

In that case, the logic remains sound, just omitting the 'all things' as the bridge...

While Franca was distracted by her thoughts, she continued to listen seriously to the rest of the sentences translated by Armored Shadow.

She didn't write down the corresponding content. As a Demoness proficient in divination, she could easily recall the full content in her dreams later.

The subsequent sentences were similar to the first, all about the opposition, contradiction, conflict, reflection, harmonization, and unity of yin and yang. They were all broad principles without in-depth explanations or practical details, making Franca feel like yawning.

The only thing she felt was worth pondering was the last half sentence of the document: "To approach the way of heaven."

From her understanding of this phrase, Franca naturally linked it to the knowledge that boons made the recipient gradually closer to the giver, and the way Underworld Daoist granted power to Amandina was indeed through a boon.

To approach the way of heaven... is this document actually about how to use mind and body harmoniously, balancing yin and yang to synchronize with the so-called way of heaven, thereby gaining power? *Is this a way of seeking boons?*

Franca saw that Armored Shadow Chen Tu had finished translating and let the documents float back. She quickly gathered

her thoughts and prepared to ask her questions.
After catching the documents, she immediately asked in her true, native language, "The first question, have you heard of anyone traveling from the world you and Underworld Daoist to another world?"
Franca didn't translate this question into Intisian for Lumian to ask, fearing Amandina would learn about the transmigration. Though they could later have Anthony hypnotize Amandina to make her forget, why not use a simpler method?
Armored Shadow Chen Tu turned its gaze towards Franca, who spoke a similar language.
After a few seconds, it looked back at Lumian, conveying the thought of "Should I answer?"
As the host of the current ritual, Lumian had to approve, or Armored Shadow and Franca wouldn't be able to communicate. Otherwise, Armored Shadow, unless using force, couldn't take the gold on the altar even if it didn't fulfill the agreement.
Lumian nodded."This is the first question."
Armored Shadow replied in a deep, hoarse voice, "Unknown."
It still used the language close to Franca's mother tongue.
Amandina grew increasingly confused.
She couldn't understand anything!
Throughout the process, she could only understand Lumian's part!
Amandina glanced at Jenna beside her and, lowering her voice, asked as though they knew each other well, "What are they talking about? What language are they using?"
Jenna chuckled softly. "Even though I look very serious and focused, I actually can't understand either."
Amandina couldn't help but sigh.
"I'll tell you secretly, Lumian doesn't understand either," Jenna smiled, glancing at Lumian who was closely watching Armored Shadow, and whispered to Amandina.
Amandina looked at Jenna, then at Lumian, and recalled the expression, tone, and wording of that sentence just now, giving a silent "wow" in her mind.
Some things are unintentionally revealed!
She curiously asked, "Why don't you learn that language from Franca?"
"We've just started in the past two days; it's tough." Jenna unconsciously frowned.
It's really tough!
At this time, hearing Armored Shadow's answer, Franca couldn't help but feel disappointed but maintained her normal demeanor and asked in her native tongue, "The second question, can you use

an illusion or a similar method to show the corpse that floated from Penglai to the river earlier?"
This question came to Franca's mind in the past two days, directly prompted by Amandina hearing the Underworld Daoist say "Beware Penglai," and Armored Shadow Chen Tu mentioning before that the mysteriously vanished Penglai had reappeared, with a corpse from there floating to the river.
Franca thought that matters related to Penglai might be important and possibly linked to their hope of returning home.
Just after asking this question, Franca suddenly realized her mistake and wanted to slap herself.
It wasn't that she shouldn't have asked this question but that the way she phrased it was problematic!
According to her current phrasing, even if the Armored Shadow agreed, it only needed to say "yes" without showing the specific appearance of the corpse. The question didn't have a corresponding mandatory requirement!
Should I prepare another 100,000 verl d'or of gold? I'm almost broke, with only a bit over 2,000 ver! d'or left... Franca regretted it deeply.
Fortunately, Armored Shadow Chen Tu was honest. Once the question was approved by Lumian, it immediately made countless transparent faces on its scales protrude frantically.
This made the surroundings instantly eerie green, with cold wind blowing.
Water droplets quickly condensed on the altar surface, gathering into a water surface, reflecting a figure.
The figure floated in the deep darkness, unable to show a specific form as if it had been hollowed out. The black robe and body were highly decayed, oozing pus.
Its face was relatively intact. Through the deep-to-the-bone rotting marks, one could still see the pale and dim skin, soft contours, and thin layer of black hair...
Franca was stunned.
I-isn't this the visitor from Resurrection Island, Harrison?
He had long died, turned into a decaying corpse floating on what seems like the River Styx, so why was he still active in Trier?
Moreover, the corpse appeared on the river a few years ago, and only then did the Demon Warlock encounter Harrison!
Though Lumian didn't understand Franca's question, he roughly guessed why Franca was so shocked from the key details of "floating," "corpse," and "Harrison's appearance."
He turned his head to look at Franca, seeing surprise, astonishment, and confusion in those lake-blue eyes.
Lumian nodded to reassure her, then said to Armored Shadow

Chen Tu, "Thank you for your answers."
The gold on the altar disintegrated, turning into pure light, flowing like water onto Armored Shadow's surface.
Seeing the fish-scale armor mostly turned golden, sacred, and heavy, Lumian frowned slightly and ended the ritual.
After extinguishing the candles, he immediately said to Franca, "Another two times, and Armored Shadow should fully restore its golden body. We can only summon it once more at most."
"Yeah." Franca finally snapped out of the shock of seeing Harrison's past corpse.
As Lumian cleaned up the altar, she smiled at Amandina and said, "We can leave now."
"Huh?" Amandina was puzzled, "Wasn't I supposed to help? I haven't done anything yet..."
"You already provided help." Franca grinned.
Amandina was even more confused."When did this happen?"
Jenna helped clarify, "Don't you feel that the language Franca and Armored Shadow spoke was similar to what the figure whispered in your ear?"
Amandina thought carefully. "It does seem similar."
After tidying up the altar, Lumian returned and casually said, "The shadow just now was likely sealed by your teacher, hmm-the figure. You being here could mislead it, making it think this represents the figure's attitude, reducing the difficulty of our communication and preventing its attack.
"That's your help, just standing by and observing."
Amandina suddenly recalled Armored Shadow's gaze and reactive response when it first appeared, understanding."Is that so... Well, um, what is my teacher's name?"
Though we all know this question is normal, it still sounds weird... who doesn't know their teacher's name and needs to ask someone else... Jenna grumbled inwardly.
Franca answered with a smile in Intisian, "Underworld Daoist.
"Also, you should call him Master, not Teacher."
"Underworld Daoist..." Amandina softly repeated the title described in Intisian.
After a few seconds, she contentedly asked, "What's the difference between Master and Teacher?"
"A Master includes a paternalistic meaning," Franca explained with some effort.
Amandina didn't ask further, her eyes sparkling as she said, "I can provide help again in the future!
"Can you help me collect the Mid-to-Low Sequence potion formulas and Beyonder characteristics of the Evernight pathway?"

"No problem." Franca didn't tell Amandina those would be available soon.
Lumian smiled and said, "I thought you'd ask to visit the Samaritan Women's Spring again."
Amandina smiled a bit reluctantly. "I'll adapt for a while longer, and go after my own Sequence matches my boon level."
After speaking, she muttered softly, "I don't want to turn into an old man with a white beard..."
...
After sending Amandina off, Lumian, Jenna, and Anthony sat in the living room of Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai, listening to Franca recounting the sentences translated by Armored Shadow.
"What do they mean?" Jenna felt like she somewhat understood but also didn't understand at all.
Franca had to translate in her own words what "Pure yin does not last, pure yang does not grow..." meant.
As Jenna listened, she gradually didn't know how to position her body and avoided moving her gaze.
Lumian took a tactical sip of water, and Anthony's expression remained unchanged.
"I think these sentences are too ordinary, not worth such high regard," Franca concluded.
Lumian pondered for a few seconds and slowly said, "No, they might be very important."

Chapter 856: The So-called Way of Heaven

Franca looked at Lumian, asking expectantly, "What do you mean?"

Lumian, now completely comfortable, glanced at Anthony and Jenna before focusing back on Franca's recliner.

"We all know that there are great existences occupying several adjacent pathways in this world, like Mr. Fool and the Celestial Worthy at the top of the Apprentice, Seer, and Marauder pathways. Then there's the Great Mother, who is at the top of the Moon, Earth, and Villain pathways.

"So, if the phrase 'to approach the way of heaven' indeed means adjusting oneself to get closer to the bestower and actively seeking boons, then in this context, what does the 'way of heaven' represent? Top of which pathways?"

Franca pondered for a moment before replying, "From our current understanding of the twenty-two pathways, the Hunter pathway definitely represents 'yang,' while the Demoness pathway might represent 'yin.' It could also be the Earth or Moon pathway. Considering the symbol of 'yang,' 'yin' here likely refers to the Demoness pathway."

Franca only knew that the Hunter pathway could transform a woman into a man.

She was unsure if the Earth or Moon pathways could turn a man into a woman, classifying them as 'yin' based on their association with nurturing, reproduction, and growth.

"So, in these sentences, the 'way of heaven' refers to the top of the Hunter and Demoness pathways?" Jenna asked, following Lumian and Franca's train of thought.

"Probably," Franca nodded emphatically. "The knowledge in Mr. Star's document might explain how to correctly understand the contradiction, opposition, transformation, and unity of 'yin' and 'yang.' Then, through one's behavior and necessary external help, harmonize yin and yang to the greatest extent to approach the corresponding way of heaven, that is, the great existences at the top of the Demoness and Hunter pathways, and obtain boons."

Lumian chuckled. "Having reached this point in the analysis, what comes to mind?"

Jenna was momentarily stunned and blurted out, "The joining of the Blood Emperor and the Primordial Demoness?"

"Barely keeping up with my thoughts," Lumian half-praised, half-mocked. "We've always wondered why the Blood Emperor and the Primordial Demoness would cooperate. As true gods of adjacent pathways, shouldn't They be mortal enemies? Madam Magician

told me that choosing a pathway determines your enemies and friends."
Aren't you two from adjacent pathways and still not enemies? Haven't you shared a bed? Franca glanced at Lumian and Jenna, feeling a slight twinge of jealousy as she lampooned.
During such moments, she often felt that her Affliction potion had digested a bit.
Of course, she knew that this enmity mainly applied to the higher levels.
Lumian continued, "The seal on the convergence effect from Mr. Door might just be a technical detail on how it's done, not the cause or purpose."
"The goal of the Blood Emperor and the Primordial Demoness is to join the body with the way of heaven?" Franca expanded her thoughts from "to approach the way of heaven," using a concept from her previous life that she felt was more appropriate.
Lumian, Jenna, and Anthony looked at Franca, more or less confused.
What does merging the body with the way of heaven mean?
Sensing her companions' confusion, Franca scratched her ponytail and tried to explain, "It means uniting with the so-called way of heaven... Uh, an imprecise analogy would be usurping a true god's position, not replacing a true god but the great existence represented by the way of heaven."
"Then why don't the Primordial Demoness and Blood Emperor directly kill each other and devour the other's Beyonder characteristics to unify yin and yang?"
Anthony questioned.
There's no need for them to consummate to give birth to two children!
Franca thought for a few seconds. "Maybe they need to harmonize before unifying? At least that's what the sentences suggest...
"In other words, the Blood Emperor and Primordial Demoness had to combine first, adjust their state, get close to the way of heaven, and then enter the unification stage. So, They had to temporarily cooperate while preparing to betray each other once they achieved Their goals...
"What do they call this? The first sword upon reaching the shore cuts down those around you!"
Lumian and the others were used to Franca's sudden nonsensical remarks and patiently waited for her to continue.
Franca suddenly laughed. "It's also possible that the Blood Emperor and Primordial Demoness came across similar knowledge but, due to a lack of proper training and understanding, They naively

thought combining yin and yang meant the Hunter and Demoness pathways had to be physically united; this resulted in Them producing some children.
"What do they call this? This is what happens when cultures don't communicate well! Uh, it's not exactly wrong, just somewhat narrow-minded, overlooking other possible approaches."
As Jenna started to feel uneasy, relating to her own experience, Lumian sarcastically remarked, "I've always said that redheads and thick-heads need to read more and study hard."
As soon as Lumian finished speaking, Franca and Jenna glared at him furiously.
"I don't think it's a misunderstanding. Even if the Blood Emperor, being half-mad, didn't fully grasp the meaning of unifying yin and yang, He had top-tier Cryptologists around Him," Anthony expressed a different view, referring to Amon, the grand duke of the Tudor Empire and Angel of the Marauder pathway.
Lumian mused aloud,"Did you forget that one of Amon's titles is the 'God of Mischief'?
"Maybe He wanted to see such a development."
"Do you resonate with Amon's mindset because you're a trickster too..." Franca muttered softly.
Jenna nodded."So, the special mirror world is a byproduct of the Blood Emperor and Primordial Demoness's attempt to unify yin and yang to approach the way of heaven?
"Or a necessary creation for occupying the way of heaven, similar to High-Sequence advancement rituals?"
"We can't draw conclusions yet, but the direction seems right." Franca took out a dark red fountain pen from her Traveler's Bag and wrote the translated sentences under different headings on her thigh.
She thoughtfully interpreted individual characters based on sentence structure, text shape, and reasonable assumptions. Finally, she organized their discussion into a report, appended it to the document, and sent it to the Major Arcana card holder as a reference instead of a conclusion.
Phew... Having completed this task, Franca breathed a sigh of relief.
"The gains from summoning Armored Shadow this time were greater than I expected. Now we can confirm that Resurrection Island is Penglai divine mountain, and Harrison is the corpse that drifted from Penglai!"
Franca was somewhat disappointed that there was still no definitive evidence proving that Underworld Daoist and Harrison's world was the same as the one they had transmigrated from-

similar language, culture, and appearance were not sufficient premises for inference.
She planned to ask Armored Shadow directly next time if it had heard of the Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, the culprit behind their transmigration!
Anthony, who knew little about Armored Shadow, Penglai, and the so-called river, was confused but understood the importance of Resurrection Island and Harrison, which the Major Arcana card holders were also interested in.
"Harrison died and was resurrected? As expected from someone from Resurrection Island... Why did Resurrection Island disappear from Underworld Daoist's world?
"Based on Harrison's words to the Demon Warlock, people from Resurrection Island have been active in our world for a long time...
"Did Resurrection Island disappear from its original world because it transmigrated here? Can it now communicate with its original world?" Jenna finally understood Franca's shock at seeing the corresponding illusion after asking the second question.
She suddenly froze, feeling she shouldn't analyze in this direction.
Franca's eyes lit up. "It's possible!"
She then left the armchair, paced back and forth, and said angrily, "Damn, why didn't we lure Harrison out this time!"
Although she realized that the visitor from Resurrection Island might be more dangerous than expected, they had Madam Magician overseeing their visit to the Samaritan Women's Spring this time.
"Our main task now is to find Harrison or the Mirror Person, Palia." Lumian stood up and spoke with the demeanor of a team leader.
Mirror Person Palia was the mineralogist, Jasmine.
Before Franca and the others could respond, he added, "I also need to start gathering supplementary ingredients for the Iron-blooded Knight."
"We can also gather ingredients for the Demoness of Despair. With no clear leads to track for now, we have plenty of free time," Franca agreed.
Anthony said, "I'll do my best on this task, but I have another one as well."
"Joining the Psychology Alchemists?" Franca asked curiously.
"That's a long-term task," Anthony explained briefly. "Ma'am Hermit's Minor Arcana card, the Knight of Swords, is in Trier and needs help from a Beyonder of the Spectator pathway. Madam Justice recommended me."
"What kind of help?" Lumian asked.
Anthony shook his head. "We haven't met yet."

Lumian nodded. "Feel free to ask for help if needed."

...

In a wooden house on the Southern Continent.

The Star leaned back in his chair, staring blankly at the paper and pen on the table.

Suddenly, a brilliant starry light appeared before him, forming a dazzling door.

The door opened, and Madam Magician stepped out, holding a letter from Franca.

Chapter 857: Inklings of That Individual

"The translation you asked for has arrived." Madam Magician tossed the stack of papers onto the table in front of The Star, then pulled up a chair and sat down.

Mr. Star didn't change his posture, merely extending his hand forward.

The stack of papers floated up, held by an invisible force, and landed in The Star's hand.

The Star began to read through the pages with focused eyes, the soft sound of pages turning filling the quiet room.

After a while, he looked up at The Magician across the desk. "What do you think of their speculation?"

Madam Magician replied with a smile, "From a writer's perspective, there's no better speculation than this. Of course, I actually believe it's likely true. What about you, Mr. Pallez?"

Mr. Star's eyes darkened, and an aged voice emerged from his mouth. "Back then, we only sensed that Alista Tudor was doing something very dangerous in Trier, but we didn't know the specifics.

"If this is true, one question remains: where did Alista Tudor acquire the knowledge to undertake these actions?"

The Magician had long considered this question. "One possibility is that the Uniqueness of the Red Priest, already somewhat tainted, combined with Alista Tudor's forceful switch to a non-adjacent pathway, ascending at the cost of madness, caused Him to sense the situation over there when He became a god, resulting in a wondrous resonance and acquisition of relevant knowledge.

"Another possibility is that it was given to him by you know who through some method."

At this point, The Magician, following her spiritual intuition, asked, "Are you saying that there are inklings of that individual in this matter?"

The aged voice responded from The Star once more, "Hasn't He always been interfering in history, steering it toward His envisioned direction?

"Of course, this might not be predestined history but rather an experiment of His.

"I never fully understood why He would help Alista Tudor forcibly ascend to Red Priest, stabilizing him to prevent immediate loss of control. Now, I have some idea: "At that time, He was only a King of Angels, making it difficult to influence and arrange events involving true gods. But what if the true god was already in a poor state, acting on instinct most of the time? It would be much easier.

"With the participation of the mad Blood Emperor Alista Tudor, the Primordial Demoness might indeed be drawn into this matter.
"In the end, He likely confirmed His hypothesis, gaining valuable experience, though it led to the unexpected eruption of the War of the Four Emperors."
The Star's voice suddenly reverted to its usual slightly magnetic tone. "How many years passed from Alista Tudor's ascension to Red Priest to the outbreak of the War of the Four Emperors?"
He immediately answered his own question with an aged voice, "Five hundred and thirty-seven years."
"Enough to verify some things." The Star remarked with a magnetic tone.
The Magician nodded slightly and said, "If this is the truth, He must be very aware of the latent issues in the special mirror world.
"Ha, if Mr. Fool were awake now, He would definitely go to the Forsaken Land of the Gods, grab Him by the collar, and demand to know what's hidden in the depths of the special mirror world!"
The Star subconsciously sighed. "'He-Mr. Fool-isn't so violent and crude."
Madam Magician chuckled. "Do you know what fantasy means?
"You have to distinguish between fantasy, truth, lies, the real emotions behind lies, and the deep-seated feelings, tendencies, impulses, and conflicts expressed through the most impossible scenarios imagined in fantasies. Also, what's said as truth, thought as truth, and even actions taken don't necessarily represent the true attitude.
"Once you distinguish these..." She glanced at the papers and pens on the desk, laughing softly. "You'll have a preliminary grasp of the art of poetry."
Mr. Star was silent for a few seconds.
"The knowledge gained this time pertains to the Hunter and Demoness pathways, also arranged by Him?"
"I think it's more likely done by the Celestial Master," The Magician pondered.
"We don't know the current state of the Celestial Master, but judging by Underworld Daoist, even if He couldn't prevent the Moses Ascetic Order's Kmerolo from being corrupted, He could deeply influence the knowledge comprising the corruption. In the Hostel incident, He noticed the Seven of Wands."
Mr. Star nodded.
"Is it His arrangement that the Hunter and Demoness among your Minor Arcana card holders got entangled? Trying to replicate the findings from the Blood Emperor and Primordial Demoness with

them?"
Madam Magician chuckled and responded, "It's more than just entanglement. Though I haven't witnessed it myself, my spiritual intuition and writer's sense tell me something must have happened.
"I pity them but can't help being curious about the details..."
Clearing her throat, she shifted the topic back.
"The current development is the inevitable result of their fate entanglement, emotional interactions, personal character, and inner growth, likely unrelated to Him.
"But!"
Madam Magician emphasized the word "but."
"I now suspect that their initial meeting was arranged by Him, and then He let things develop naturally.
"Do you understand? A top-level writer sets the stage, constructs events, and lets the characters express, demonstrate, interact, and conflict on the stage to create the most wonderful story."
The Star initially wanted to mock the writers but glanced at the paper and pen on the desk and remained silent.
The Magician sighed and then said, "We should be able to decrypt more of that information now.
"What about the payment? What's the payment for the Two of Cups?"
As he took out one Beyonder ingredient after another from a silver box, The Star spoke.
"They have been prepared long ago.
"These are the potion formulas and ingredients from Sequence 9 Sleepless to Sequence 7 Nightmare."
Madam Magician looked and smiled. "Not giving that gold coin?"
"Although the Two of Cups is our chosen guide for that dream, she can't be given it too easily, even if she's trustworthy and knowledgeable about the environment. I'll give her another task and tell her that besides the Sequence 6 Soul Assurer potion formula and corresponding ingredients, she will receive a special reward." The Star brushed his slightly messy hair and smiled.
The Magician nodded slightly, then asked another question, "I've always wanted to ask, Mr. Pallez, why do you remain with Mr. Star even after advancing to Sequence 1?"
The Star's eyes darkened again, and the aged voice returned.
"When you get old, you desire stability and don't want to change your accustomed environment."
The Magician smiled in response. "I want to hear the truth."
The Star sighed and said in an aged voice, "When you become a Sequence 1 Archangel, you'll understand. You'll feel the terrifying

impact of Mr. Fool and the Celestial Worthy's conflict, forcing me to stay within the Church of the Evernight Goddess for some protection."
Madam Magician nodded, then gathered the potion formulas and ingredients from the table.
After a moment of thought, she asked Mr. Star, "Where did you obtain these ingredients?"
The Star smiled. "Sent an application to the Pope."
Madam Magician pondered and asked further, "Her Holiness didn't ask why and just gave them to you?"
"Yes, just given to me like that." Mr. Star smiled calmly.
Madam Magician seemed to have an epiphany.
She then stood up, opened a starry door in the void, and left the wooden house.
...
The night was just receding, and dawn had not yet broken at Lumian's rented apartment.
Jenna lay under the covers, her white shoulders exposed, leaning beside Lumian.
She stretched out her right hand, trying to pry open his eyelids.
"What are you doing?" Lumian asked, both amused and exasperated.
Jenna pouted. "You're not looking at me with your eyes closed. I have to be proactive and help you open them."
Reluctantly, Lumian opened his eyes, meeting her blue eyes, which sparkled with a hidden darkness.
After a few seconds of staring, Lumian remarked thoughtfully, "Your mental state seems much better than before."
Jenna withdrew her hand, propping her chin up with a smile as she gazed at Lumian's face and eyes. "Yeah, I felt much better after that talk with Franca."
Lumian let out a scoff. "Who was it that said the worst-case scenario was Franca coming to kill me, and you'd agree? You knew Franca wouldn't do such a thing."
"That was just a fantasy, a projection of inner emotions, self-conflict, and self-destructive tendencies. Didn't you catch that?" Jenna retorted.
Lumian chortled."Of course I did. That's why I said it was best to confront the issues between you early."
He instinctively reached out to pat Jenna's head but hesitated midway, his hand freezing.
Seeing this, Jenna's gaze dimmed slightly. She pursed her lips and grabbed his hand, forcing it to the back of her head.
Lumian slowly started to pat her, transitioning from awkwardness

to naturalness.
Jenna watched him with a smile. "What about yours?"
Lumian fell silent.
Jenna didn't press further, instead asking cheerfully, "Did you and Franca...?"
Lumian sighed. "I try not to talk about my relationship with her in front of you."
Jenna smiled. "Before my talk with Franca, it would have made me sad, conflicted, and miserable, even if I tried to hide it. Now, though I still have those emotions, I feel more hopeful and even relieved when you mention it. Do you understand this contradictory feeling?
"Many of my previous choices were also like that."
Lumian nodded slowly. "You know Franca. Although she might have made up her mind, she still hesitates when it comes to the final step. Lately, I've noticed her being awkward whenever we see each other. Anthony probably noticed too but didn't say anything.
"I can't be the one to initiate, right?"
"Yes, you should. Go to her now, this morning!" Jenna said without hesitation.
Lumian looked deeply at her. "Are you trying to create stronger bonds to keep her in critical moments?"
Jenna grunted. "I will try to keep her, but I'll also respect her final decision."

Chapter 858: Taking the Initiative

Lumian stroked Jenna's hair once more. "Actually, Franca going home might not be a bad thing. If their world doesn't face an apocalypse or dangerous situations like ours, I could help you knock your brother out so you could take him and Franca there together."

Jenna gazed at Lumian with her clear blue eyes. "What about you?"

Lumian fell silent for a moment before responding, "I'll see how things go."

Jenna opened her mouth as if to say something but then closed it again.

After a few seconds, she didn't press for details. Instead, she spoke seriously, "On the one hand, I want to keep her here. On the other hand, I'm afraid that the bigger Franca's hope, the bigger her disappointment will be. If she finally confirms that returning home is impossible, she'll definitely break down. For a Beyonder, that's very dangerous, especially the higher the Sequence.

"She mentioned, or maybe it was Emperor Roselle who said it, that a person is the sum of their social relationships. Anthony also talked to me about the importance of social relationships for a person. I know he saw that I still had some psychological issues and wanted to help me through this. When you sought treatment from Madam Susie and Madam Justice, didn't they also emphasize the importance of rebuilding social relationships? For Franca, the most important relationships are with you and me. The closer we are now, the more it will help stabilize her in the future. Just me alone might not be enough."

Lumian withdrew his hand, looking at Jenna for a few seconds.

"Since finding out Franca's true origins, you've been thinking a lot, haven't you?

"Why do you think she might not be able to go back home?"

Jenna's eyes flickered, and she said provocatively, "Franca later told me that Emperor Roselle and she came from the same world and the same country. I was thinking-the Emperor was at least an Angel, maybe even close to becoming a true god, and he couldn't go back.

"Don't you think that means it's either hopeless or impossible?"

Lumian sighed with a smile. "But Franca and the others believe that either the Emperor didn't have time to find a way back before something unexpected happened, or he faked his death and already transmigrated back."

Jenna shook her head. "It's definitely not the latter. If it were, the Emperor would have destroyed parts of his diary before crossing

back."
"You're quite sharp," Lumian remarked thoughtfully. "From the Emperor's diary that Franca shared, it's clear he encountered something terrifying in his later years. But what confuses me is that during that period, he never seemed to consider going back. Also, he valued his eldest daughter highly, and Queen Mystic Bernadette is still active in our world. These are the reasons I think Franca's hopes are slim. They probably have similar thoughts but just don't want to believe it."
Lumian's voice suddenly grew somber. "People need hope to live..."
Jenna chuckled, tracing circles on Lumian's bare chest. "You're doing much better too, being able to say something like that."
Before Lumian could respond, she lifted her head and looked at him. "Go see Franca this morning, okay?"
"Is this something I can do alone?" Lumian smiled. "If she doesn't want to, I can't force her, can I?"
Jenna couldn't help but laugh. "She's inclined to agree deep down. She's just feeling a bit awkward after the initial emotions have calmed. Especially since she has to face you, her friend's brother who knows her true state."
"You know Franca," Lumian teased. "When she's impulsive, she'll try anything, but when she calms down, she might turn into an ostrich."
"Take the initiative. Maybe she's just waiting for you to make the first move," Jenna suggested, feeling a mix of jealousy and anticipation.
Lumian spread his hands. "How do I take the initiative? I've never been the one to make the first move in such matters. I can't just go up to Franca and say I'm here to fulfill our agreement, right?"
Jenna's eyes sparkled as she thought for a moment.
"Show your guilt in front of her, help her out as much as you can, and then ask if she needs a massage for her head, shoulders, and back. If she doesn't object and there's physical contact, you can gradually... gradually..." Jenna trailed off, quickly concluding, "Got it?"
"You seem quite experienced," Lumian said, amused.
Jenna reminisced. "When I was a Showy Diva, I saw some things. Also, the dancers under Franca liked to read novels about love and interactions between men and women. A single book could be passed around by dozens to hundreds of people. Thanks to Emperor Roselle and some remaining compulsory education, some of them could understand simple stories, and those who couldn't would listen to others. It was one of the few bright spots in their lives.

"I read a few as well and learned how those playboys and Dandyists behaved."
Lumian laughed, moving closer to Jenna and placing his hands on her smooth, bare shoulders. "Like this?"
"Yes." Jenna rolled her eyes. "Now you think of giving me a massage? I'm nearly falling apart because of you. You start reluctantly and then..."
As Jenna teased him, her words caught in her throat.
Lumian leaned in with a teasing smile. "It's six in the morning..."
Jenna swiftly pulled the covers over herself and nimbly jumped out of bed like a deer.
Wrapped in the blanket, she looked at Lumian and laughed softly.
"Go find Franca now and use your Conspirer skills."
Before Lumian could respond, Jenna grabbed her Traveler's Bag and disappeared into the shadows of the room.
Lumian stood still for a moment, sighing. "Couldn't you at least leave the blanket?"
After a while, the blanket was thrown from the shadows, landing on Lumian.
Lumian shook his head with a smile, mimicking Franca's voice in his mind.
Ascetic, activate!
...
Inside Apartment 702 at 9 Rue Orosai.
Franca opened the door and saw Lumian. She instantly felt uncomfortable and wished she could slam the door in his face.
As she turned to walk to the armchair, she asked, "Jenna didn't come with you?"
"She went back to rest," Lumian said thoughtfully.
Franca suddenly understood, her expression turning complicated.
She stood by the armchair, momentarily forgetting to sit down.
Lumian glanced at her and asked intentionally, "Did you digest more of your Affliction potion?"
"Dammit!" Franca gritted her teeth, conjuring several crystalline ice spikes and hurling them at Lumian.
Lumian dodged easily and moved to the sofa area, looking back at the fuming Franca.
See, now we can forget the awkwardness and talk properly.
But Franca's reaction was a bit too strong. We need to make that agreement a reality soon, or she might get tangled up again...
Lumian put on a placating smile and said to Franca, "It's a habitual taunt. You know how Hunters are."
Franca snorted and sat in the recliner.
Today, she wore a fitted white shirt with ruffled cuffs and a lace

flower at the neck, paired with cream-colored trousers and her usual fluffy slippers.
Following Miss Celia Bello's guidance, Lumian feigned guilt and asked, "How's your Affliction potion digestion going?"
Franca puffed up her cheeks. "About a third."
"Hmm, you've got the self-inflicted pain down, but you're still lacking in causing pain to others," Lumian said cautiously.
Then, he proactively poured her a glass of water and asked with a smile, "Want a shoulder and leg massage? You must be tired after running around for clues on Harrison these days."
"Massage?" Franca was stunned, then wary, eyeing Lumian suspiciously.
After a few moments, she took the glass of water and drank. "No need."
Eh... Great theorist of male-female interaction, master of theory Miss Celia Bello, your method doesn't work... I have to rely on my own improvisation as a Conspirer... Lumian quickly sat down on the single sofa.
He opened his mouth as if to say something, then closed it, taking out the Black Tear headpiece from his Traveler's Bag.
Franca realized Lumian was checking if the Demoness of Black was observing through the mirror.
Well, perfect timing... Franca was about to mention the potion formula and ingredients for Amandina when she saw Lumian quickly put away the Black Tear and give her a look.
Wh- The Demoness of Black is watching... Franca swallowed her words.
The next second, she saw Lumian get up, walk over to her, and squeeze into the armchair with a smile.
Hey... Hey, hey! Franca was stunned.
Her first reaction was to teach this space-invader a lesson, but then she realized Lumian's purpose.
In the Demoness of Black's eyes, we're lovers. If we don't show any intimacy, it'll be suspicious...
Okay, let's put on a show...
Franca felt Lumian's arm wrap around her waist.
Her body stiffened before she forced herself to relax.
Then, Lumian turned her around, and she found herself looking into his deep blue eyes and chiseled face.
"I'm here to fulfill my promise," Lumian said, giving her another look.
He chuckled softly and slowly lowered his head.
Franca's eyes widened.
Hey! Are you doing it for real?

She instinctively wanted to break free but remembered the Demoness of Black was watching and Lumian's hint to cooperate.
You little brat, are you taking advantage of me? Franca thought angrily. Then she remembered the previous agreement and sighed inwardly. Fine, it was bound to happen anyway...
Her long eyelashes fluttered, and her eyes slowly closed as her body softened.
Then, she felt Lumian's lips, warm and firm, breaking through her defenses.
In a daze, Franca thought, No, no! The Demoness of Black is still watching! How shameful!
Almost simultaneously, she heard Lumian's husky voice in her ear. "Let's go to the bedroom."
You're quite considerate... Once we're in the bedroom, covered by the blanket, the Demoness of Black can't see... It'll also solidify our relationship... Franca vaguely nodded, feeling herself lifted into the air.
...
In the warm and intimate bedroom.
With a lingering blush on her cheeks, Franca turned to Lumian and said, "I just remembered something I need to tell you..."
She asked with her eyes if the Demoness of Black was still watching.
Lumian chuckled. "The Demoness of Black left a while ago."
Franca was stunned for a moment, her foggy mind realizing something was off.
"You didn't check... How do you know?"
Lumian looked sincere. "The Demoness of Black didn't come today."
"...?" Franca was speechless.
She quickly understood, and in a fit of embarrassment and anger, she pounced on Lumian, hitting him.
"You tricked me! You tricked me!"
"..."
"You can't use something like this to deceive teammates, understand?"
"I understand."
"This makes it hard for me to trust your hints in the future. What if next time I think you're lying, but the Demoness of Black really shows up?"
"I'm sorry."
"Alright, I'll trust you one more time, but don't let it happen again! Don't let it happen again!"
"..."

Chapter 859: Ingenious Plan

859 "Ingenious" Plan

After Franca vented her anger and lay back down, Lumian finally asked, "What were you saying earlier?"

Franca glanced at the curtained bedroom window, making it clear: Check if the Demoness of Black is watching!

Lumian replied casually, "We're inside a Bottle of Fiction."

"..." Franca blinked. "When did that happen?"

"When I closed the door. I didn't want to disturb the neighbors," Lumian answered earnestly.

"..." Franca felt another surge of anger. She snapped, "You still need to check! What if the Demoness of Black can penetrate the Bottle of Fiction without you noticing?"

"Yes, yes." Lumian admitted his fault and took out the Black Tear headpiece from his Traveler's Bag, quickly sensing for a few seconds before putting it back.

Franca finally relaxed and nodded in satisfaction. "The thing is, Mr. Star gave me another task. He said, in addition to the Affliction potion formula and the materials, there will be a special reward."

"What task?" Lumian asked cooperatively.

Franca looked puzzled and said, "To get some water from the Samaritan Woman's Spring."

Lumian's first reaction was to consider the purpose of the task, but he quickly remembered that Franca had said Mr. Star was likely a high-ranking Red Glove from the Church of Evernight, and the Underworld Daoist who could grant others Beyonder powers from the Darkness pathway.

"It's understandable that Mr. Star, or rather the Church of Evernight behind him, needs water from the Samaritan Woman's Spring. But this task is too simple for us right now. And yet he wants to give you a special reward. Doesn't that seem a bit strange?" Lumian pondered aloud.

Franca thought for a moment and spoke, "I agree. It feels like he designed this task just to give me the special reward. It doesn't make sense. We've only met once."

Compared to other Demonesses in the Demoness Sect, one of Franca's greatest strengths was not assuming that every man she met would be infatuated with her or want to please her.

Lumian considered for a few seconds and said, "Maybe that special reward will bring a lot of trouble. It also represents something Mr. Star truly wants you to do."

Franca nodded in understanding. "Free rewards are the most expensive. What appears 'free' often comes with hidden costs."

Understanding this, she felt less worried.
She thought the potential problems with the special reward, even if they brought significant trouble, should be something she and her companions could handle.
Otherwise, the Major Arcana card holders wouldn't make such a choice.
She then turned to Lumian and asked, "How's your collection of the supplementary ingredients going?"
This should have been a daily concern, but hadn't she been feeling uncomfortable every time she saw Lumian these past few days?
Lumian reflected for a moment before answering, "I found a large battlefield from the war a few years ago and got a bag of blood-stained soil."
"I thought you'd go to the camp where Anthony and his comrades were attacked," Franca teased.
Lumian responded with amusement, "Am I that much of a devil? Besides, that's not a large battlefield and might be polluted by an evil god's worship."
Franca concurred succinctly, "What about the others?"
"I confirmed that there's active lava at the bottom of the volcano on Saint Tick Island, but it's unnecessary to collect it now. It will solidify quickly in the Traveler's Bag. I'll teleport it when it's needed." Lumian had been using his teleportation ability to travel around the world these days. "I plan to make the powder of plants and trees polluted by the Stone of Catastrophe myself."
As for acorns, that was too simple.
"Make it yourself?" Franca was surprised. "Is that possible?"
"It should be theoretically feasible. Certain parts of a Beyonder creature can replace such supplementary ingredients. And I have the Sword of Courage. I can place it and its companions on a pile of plants and trees, monitoring and replacing consumables. In about a few days, I should be able to create polluted plants and trees. Of course, this pollution will be more complex and severe than simple Stone of Catastrophe pollution. I'll consult Madam Magician in advance to see if the amount should be reduced."
"Indeed," Franca's eyes brightened, then dimmed slightly. "But the Plague Mother Serpent bile and Silver Hunter's fragments for the supplementary ingredients of the Demoness of Despair can't be made by the Black Tear."
"No rush. Jenna hasn't fully digested the Pleasure potion yet. It will take a few more days or even a week or two to become a Demoness of Affliction." Lumian thought and said, "I have collected the blood of seven different plague victims."
Although there was no widespread plague at the moment, many

places on the Northern and Southern Continents had sporadic outbreaks. They were either quickly contained or limited to small, isolated areas without spreading.
With the Magic Mirror Divination of the two Demonesses, Lumian pinpointed eight or nine similar locations, then teleported there with Lugano.
If the authorities had already noticed the outbreak and were working to control it, he would leave after collecting the blood of the plague victims. If the plague was still quietly spreading, he would attempt to heal it with Lugano's help. If it couldn't be solved, he would find a way to inform the authorities.
After these few days of hard work, Lumian had basically achieved his goals.
Franca breathed a sigh of relief, stating, "Remember to use the Black Tear to deliver the potion formula and all the materials Mr. Star gave to Amandina.
"Sigh... When will I completely digest the Affliction potion?"
Although her current digestion progress could be considered very fast, she still felt it wasn't enough. The person next to her was just one step away from the final domestication step, ready to hold the ceremony and become a Sequence 4 demigod.
Lumian turned his head to Franca and laughed.
"I just told you, you're still lacking in the part about causing others pain. And the target should be of high Sequence, otherwise, it has to be replaced with numbers."
Franca didn't link it to her own pain this time and started thinking seriously.
Causing others pain, high Sequence... Causing others pain, high Sequence...
Muttering to herself, Franca suddenly turned her head, her eyes shining brightly at Lumian.
Lumian's smile faded as he raised an eyebrow and asked, "Do you have a bold idea?"
Franca chuckled. "You have a false Angel rank. If I can make you feel pain, wouldn't the digestion speed be incredibly fast?"
"But it has to be real pain." Lumian didn't dismiss Franca's suggestion outright.
"For example, castration?" Franca glanced at the blanket with a growing smile.
Lumian fell silent for a moment before responding, "We can try."
"Wait, you're actually agreeing?" Franca was startled. She had only been joking with the suggestion of "castration."
"If it can really help you quickly digest the Affliction potion." Lumian shrugged. "It can grow back anyway."

"Forget it, that's too painful. It would leave you with serious psychological trauma and issues." Franca said, ruffling her tousled hair.
Suddenly, her eyes lit up. "I have a better plan. An ingenious plan!"
Lumian felt uneasy, sensing that Franca's new plan might be even harder to endure than "castration."
Franca's smile turned wicked.
"I thought of that Julie from the castration, and her digestion method. She would seize the moment when the target was about to reach ultimate satisfaction, then cut it off, plunging them from extreme pleasure into extreme pain.
"I can be gentler, not cutting it off, but preventing you from reaching ultimate satisfaction. Let you yearn and suffer without fulfillment, which is also a kind of intense pain..."
Lumian raised an eyebrow, unable to speak.
Franca's smile grew more sinister, having found a prank to pull.
"For this, I need to bind you with the Demoness's spider silk, prepare more tools, and to enhance the stimulation, you need to use your Ascetic abilities to refrain from burning the silk...
"Although it won't compare to Julie's method, your false Angel rank should help me digest it quickly."
Saying this, Franca clicked her tongue. "I never thought I'd do something like this, and be the one doing the tormenting."
In the past, Lumian might have lacked a concrete concept of this pain, but after experiencing the two Demonesses, he could now imagine how unbearable that torment would be.
"This is the hell of pain." Lumian couldn't help but sigh.
"That's the Demoness, bringing pleasure and pain," Franca said with a smile.
Lumian jumped out of bed and picked up his clothes.
"Eh?" Franca looked puzzled.
Lumian responded in a deep voice, "We're going to the Samaritan Woman's Spring now."
Franca was first stunned, then burst into laughter, rolling on the bed.
She had regained her normal control over her desires after passing the Pleasure stage, so even after being with Lumian, tasting long-lost pleasure, and achieving unprecedented satisfaction, she still felt weird because it was someone she knew well, who also knew her original gender. But now, she suddenly found it amusing and interesting, making her feel much less uncomfortable.
"Give it a try, give it a try." She lay on the bed, her eyes bright as she continued with her prank.
Lumian sighed again.

"We'll talk after we get the water from the Samaritan Woman's Spring."

...

Beside the Samaritan Woman's Spring, shrouded in gray-white fog.

Since Lumian didn't approach and trigger any anomalies, Franca patiently waited for a while and then used the golden vial given by Mr. Star to collect half a vial of water from the Samaritan Woman's Spring.

They didn't bring Jenna, fearing that her encounter with Krismona's shadow might lead to uncontrollable changes. Lumian planned to bring Jenna here after becoming an Iron-blooded Knight with a certain level of self-protection.

The high-ranking Major Arcana card holders seemed to dislike entering the underground or underground catacombs. But Lumian, marked and branded, felt that even as a demigod, he should still be able to enter the area of the Samaritan Woman's Spring.

Not long after, Franca put away the golden vial, and the two walked shoulder to shoulder towards the edge of the gray fog.

As they approached the edge of the fog on the slope, Lumian and Franca simultaneously noticed a blurry figure outside the fog slowly approaching.

Franca first darted to the side, then stared intently for two seconds.

Her expression suddenly became excited, and she said in a hushed voice to Lumian, "Harrison!"

The visitor from Resurrection Island, Harrison!

They had failed to converge with him last time, and now they coincidentally ran into him!

Chapter 860: The True Meaning of Those Words

When Franca uttered the name, Lumian also saw the approximate outline of the figure outside: Dressed in a black robe, with light hair, pale skin, and dark brown eyes, he didn't look like an Intisian.

Although Lumian had never seen Harrison in person, he had seen the image Franca had depicted using dream divination and a corresponding ritual, so it wasn't hard to identify the person outside the gray fog.

Seeing Franca's excitement, Lumian raised his right hand and gestured downward, signaling his companion to control her emotions.

Franca, an experienced Beyonder in combat, quickly composed herself and nodded at Lumian.

She understood Lumian's intention not to act rashly but to observe and see what Harrison intended to do. By understanding his actions, they could determine his Sequence, ability characteristics, and primary intentions.

This way, whatever response they made afterward would be more composed.

Franca shrank further to the side of the slope, using the gray fog as cover, and observed Harrison, who was holding a white candle.

Meanwhile, she couldn't help but muse, The Law of Beyonder Characteristics Convergence really works!

We gave up too soon after just one try. It was our fault for not respecting science -no, mysticism. If we had tried a few more times, wouldn't he have come?

Franca felt at ease, knowing that only Beyonders like Lumian, marked by Mr. Fool, could enter the area around the Samaritan Woman's Spring, while others could only see a gray-white fog and found it difficult to pass through.

She had tried earlier and found she couldn't penetrate the fog on her own, prompting Lumian to mock her, saying, "Even Madame Hela couldn't do it. Where did you get the confidence that you could?" This only strengthened her resolve to have Lumian help her digest the Affliction potion.

Lumian stood beside Franca, observing every move of the figure outside while recalling his encounters with Beyonders of the Death, Darkness, and Warrior pathways, hoping to quickly formulate the most effective strategy against Harrison based on their combat characteristics and abilities.

Holding the white candle, Harrison took a few steps outside the gray fog, glanced around, and then continued forward.

He walked into the gray fog as if passing through a curtain of water!
He can pass through the gray fog barrier?
How?
Franca's sky-blue eyes widened in shock, disbelief, and reluctance.
Lumian was equally surprised.
But he hadn't ruled out the possibility that Harrison could break through the fog barrier and enter the area around the Samaritan Woman's Spring. He just hadn't expected it to be so easy for him.
Based on Harrison's constant search for scenes closely related to death, darkness, and dusk, and his drifting as a corpse on the River Styx in Underworld Daoist and company's world, Lumian reasonably suspected that he might have a way or an item to penetrate the fog barrier.
Lumian had expected to see Harrison perform a strange ritual or take out an item with an otherworldly style. Instead, like himself, Harrison had simply walked into the area around the Samaritan Woman's Spring, covered by gray fog!
Seeing that the fog no longer served as a barrier, leaving only the fog to interfere with their vision, Lumian made a decisive move and extinguished the white candle in his hand.
As he expected, the surrounding darkness silently surged in, activating the Underworld Daoist's mark on his right palm without corroding his body.
He had kept the candle lit to maintain this state, partly because it couldn't last long in the current situation without risking turning into a catacombs administrator and partly to mislead any potential enemies, setting a trap.
As Lumian extinguished the candle, Franca quickly took action.
Unable to borrow the Black Tear from Lumian, she directly took out an Ice Amulet and a mirror from her Traveler's Bag.
With a flash of crystalline cold light, Franca, illuminated by the candle's yellowish flame, entered the mirror in her hand.
As her figure disappeared, the unheld mirror fell to the ground, only to be accurately caught by Lumian.
Holding the mirror, Lumian immediately activated the contract mark, transforming into a shadow creature and blending completely into the darkness enveloped by the gray fog.
Before Harrison could get closer, they had completed their concealment.
In the void behind the mirror, Franca, holding the burning white candle, quickly surveyed her surroundings.
She found that the area was filled with the same gray-white fog as outside, permeating every corner.

The illusory dark tunnels, like spider webs, were excluded by the fog, appearing blurry and hard to see.
Sure enough... Franca wasn't surprised by this situation.
Lumian had already told her that this area was isolated from the spirit world, making spirit world traversal unusable here.
With even the spirit world being isolated, the mirror world would certainly be no exception!
Because the mirror had been brought into the fog-covered area, Franca could enter the mirrored region to hide but couldn't traverse to any mirror outside the underground catacombs-this was the principle that allowed the Traveler's Bag to continue being used.
Franca couldn't even reach the mirrors on Lumian's person, let alone those outside the catacombs!
Of course, Franca hadn't intended to use the mirror world for anything other than hiding, preventing the yellowish glow of the white candle from being seen by Harrison.
During their previous ambush on Harrison, she hadn't done this because the area she could monitor through the mirror was too small, and all senses, including vision, would be severely weakened.
Franca approached the glass mirror and found that Lumian had thoughtfully turned it towards Harrison, allowing her to see their target.
Seeing Harrison, illuminated by the yellowish glow of the white candle, slowly moving down the slope, Franca grew even more puzzled.
How did he get through the fog barrier?
Could he also bear Mr. Fool's mark?
But Madam Judgment and the other Major Arcana card holders didn't know!
He hadn't used an item or performed a ritual earlier, relying on his own ability?
But whether it was the Apprentice pathway's mastery of seals or the Marauder pathway's exploitation of loopholes, they are all within Mr. Fool's domain. It doesn't make sense to bypass the fog barrier...
Mr. Fool's mark...
At this thought, Franca's heart skipped a beat, and a title flashed in her mind: The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings!
Harrison bears the mark of the Celestial Worthy, allowing him to penetrate the fog barrier? Franca made this startling and shocking guess.
She found it quite reasonable.

Based on the current information, it seemed that the Celestial Worthy was the culprit behind their transmigration into this world, and Resurrection Island was Mount Penglai, a node where the two worlds intersected or a transmigration point. If this was true, it was natural for Harrison, from Resurrection Island or Mount Penglai, to have a close relationship with the Celestial Worthy.

They had been misled by Harrison's pursuit of death, darkness, and dusk-related scenes and his mastery of the depths of death, overlooking this point!

Perhaps, as Jenna had speculated, Harrison's deep research into death didn't necessarily mean he was a Beyonder of that pathway!

This could better explain why they couldn't converge with him last time. *Why had they coincidentally encountered him this time?*

As a shadow creature, Lumian also thought of the Celestial Worthy, the great being competing with Mr. Fool for the apex powers of the Seer, Apprentice, and Marauder pathways.

He watched Harrison's slow advance and thought of more things.

Previously, Harrison seemingly met the Mirror Person, Jasmine, leading us to speculate that he was also involved in Project Vortex...

Now it's almost certain. Madam Magician mentioned encountering the Celestial Worthy's followers while dealing with Overseer Perle, who was one of the initiators of Project Vortex...

This background can explain why an outsider like Harrison can frequently appear in Underground Trier without being found by the Purifiers...

Lumian didn't rush to act. He was unsure of Harrison's level and wanted to see what Harrison intended to do by repeatedly coming to the Samaritan Woman's Spring. This might reveal a lot of important information.

As he followed Harrison's movements, Lumian suddenly understood why the Underworld Daoist had warned Amandina to "beware of Penglai."

He had previously thought that the reappearance of Mount Penglai and the bodies floating on the river had alerted the Underworld Daoist. But given his dire state, closer to a wraith, he couldn't discern Amandina's exact location and situation, so he had instinctively issued a warning.

Now it seemed the message was to tell Amandina that someone from Penglai had been to the Samaritan Woman's Spring and to be cautious!

Just as Lumian sighed internally at their earlier oversight, Harrison suddenly turned his head and looked towards their

hiding spot.
Almost simultaneously, the grand, layered voice of Termiboros echoed in his ear:
"Protect your Traveler's Bag."
Uh... Lumian didn't have time to discern the purpose behind Termiboros' suggestion. He quickly reached for his waist and grabbed the Traveler's Bag.
The next moment, Harrison raised his right hand.
Lumian felt the Traveler's Bag being tugged by an invisible force, but he held it tightly.
Marauder? Not a power of the Death pathway? A special boon from the Celestial Worthy? Puzzled, Lumian immediately shifted his position using the shadows.
Behind Harrison, darkness surged, outlining Lumian's form.

Chapter 861: Marauder?

As soon as Lumian exited his shadow creature state, he let out a grunt.

Two beams of white light shot from his nostrils, flying towards Harrison, who had no time to dodge.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian sensed a dense aura of death emanating from Harrison. His spirit abruptly contracted, transforming into a tiny, golden millet-like particle, hiding in the deepest void of his body, unreachable.

The two beams of white light hit Harrison's body, but it was like striking a piece of decayed wood or a lifeless corpse, producing no effect.

Harrison turned swiftly towards Lumian, and his contracted spirit expanded instantly, filling his body once more.

With this change, a root wrapped in white cloth swiftly formed in Harrison's right palm.

He swung this semi-illusory root at Lumian.

The white cloth strips on the root fluttered gently, stirring up cries that were either mournful or wailing.

They drilled into Lumian's ears, causing him to falter just as he was about to change his position, unable to dodge in time.

Smack!

The root wrapped in white cloth struck Lumian's body.

His skin quickly turned pale, and a sense of death deepened rapidly.

Crack!

Lumian's body cracked like a mirror, shattering into dull fragments that fell to the ground.

Immediately after, he reappeared at the side of the slope, shaking the mirror that held Franca.

Franca understood his intention, immediately exiting the mirror with the burning white candle and landing not far from him.

Lumian, with his other hand, reached into the Traveler's Bag, took out the Black Tear accessory, and tossed it to Franca.

Here, there was no worry about the mystical plague attached to the Black Tear spreading, and the Demoness of Affliction could withstand the corresponding mystical pathogens for longer!

Lumian even suspected that, due to the special nature of the Samaritan Woman's Spring, the mystical pathogens created by the Black Tear would only survive for a limited time before perishing.

As for what to do during that time, Lumian had already considered it-after throwing out the Black Tear accessory, he quickly reached into the Traveler's Bag again, grasping the hilt of the Sword of

Courage.
He intended to have the sword share half the damage and effects with him!
Lumian wasn't overly concerned about the excess courage issue:
With Franca around, she would guide and correct the Warrior's choices in a more subtle way that the Warrior would accept, like occupying a better position, making the Warrior throw the sword to her for brief use, and then not catching it when it was thrown back, preventing both from being affected by the courage.
As Franca put it, with an external brain, they could be bolder in using the Sword of Courage.
Of course, this could only effectively reduce the influence of courage, not completely avoid it.
Harrison didn't just stand by and watch Lumian and Franca prepare. He threw the root wrapped in white cloth towards them.
The root rapidly became illusory in midair, disintegrating into intertwined pale and greenish light, merging into the darkness.
Immediately, several translucent, eerie pale-white hands emerged from the ground beneath Lumian and Franca, cold and sinister, grasping at their ankles and calves.
These seemed to induce some kind of paralysis.
At the same time, Harrison's mouth moved, chanting an incantation in a strange language.
With a whoosh, blazing-white flames ignited beside Lumian's feet, bringing high temperatures to counter the chill, cold, and paralysis created by the pale-white hands.
Franca, with the Black Tear accessory wrapped around her wrist, silently let the eerie, quiet black flames of the Demoness flow like water, engulfing the transparent hands trying to affect her, setting them ablaze.
Lumian finally grasped the Sword of Courage, instantly becoming fearless.
He drew the iron-black straight sword and slashed forward.
A huge fireball, blazing white with a hint of blue, formed and shot straight at Harrison, whose black hair was only a thin layer.
Harrison, seeing this, did not move. He quickly finished the last two sentences of the incantation and pointed his right hand towards the Samaritan Woman's Spring.
Franca, just breaking free from the pale-white hands, finally deciphered what the enemy was chanting.
One sentence was "Steal the secrets of heaven," and the other was unclear at the beginning, ending with "Swift as a decree, be driven."
Below, at the Samaritan Woman's Spring, the pale-white water

began to bubble, reflecting a figure of a woman, serene as the night but rotting and oozing pus.
The figure silently gazed at the outside world without any movement.
But in front of Harrison, a similar yet more illusory and flickering figure appeared.
As Lumian's fireball-cleaved out from the Sword of Courage-approached this figure, it gradually dimmed, quickly becoming illusory, and mostly vanished.
The remaining bit exploded on the spot, forcing Harrison back two steps.
Seeing this, Lumian didn't hesitate to activate the residual aura of the Blood Emperor in his right palm.
Want to compete?
Fine!
Let's see who can exert more influence on the Samaritan Woman's Spring!
Nothing to fear!
Splash!
The pale-white water retreated into the dark, bottomless spring, and a sense of wild frenzy instantly descended.
At that moment, whether it was Harrison, Lumian, or Franca, they all felt a shock to their minds and bodies, wanting to submit, temporarily losing their ability to think, their minds blank.
The cold, rotting sensation in Lumian's right palm emerged, suppressing the residual aura of the Blood Emperor.
The frenzied, violent feeling from the spring quickly receded.
Lumian was the first to regain his thoughts. He raised the iron-black Sword of Courage and rushed to Harrison, slashing at his head.
Bang!
Amidst the sound of an explosion and scattered flames, Harrison's body reverted to a sinister, deathly paper figurine.
The paper figurine lightly adhered to the blade of the Sword of Courage, torn to pieces by the violent shockwaves and set ablaze by the white-blue flames.
Multiple similar paper figurines appeared around Lumian, all exuding a sinister, pale, deathly aura, with facial features painted in a horrifying and maliciously humorous manner.
The next second, black flames flew from Franca, landing on these paper figurines, burning the spirituality and mysticism that sustained them.
In the blink of an eye, these sinister paper figurines fell in a series of wailing cries, turning to ashes.

"Harrison has fled!" Franca judged quickly after a glance.
Lumian, holding the Sword of Courage, sprinted up the slope, chasing to the edge of the gray fog.
The fog swayed gently, seemingly indicating that the enemy had just escaped.
Lumian was about to pursue when Franca's voice reached his ears, "Let's switch Sealed Artifacts; mine is almost at its limit."
Lumian, undeterred by the Black Tear's negative effects, immediately threw the Sword of Courage over.
As soon as the iron-black straight sword left his hand, rationality and clarity reclaimed his mind:
Almost forgot that Franca can't leave the gray fog...
If I go out alone, even if I catch up with Harrison, without an external brain and a pre-planned strategy, the Sword of Courage would be my biggest problem...
Franca, though eager to catch Harrison, remained rational enough to quickly analyze the situation and make an accurate judgment...
Once Lumian caught the Black Tear, he immediately placed it back in its isolated space within the Traveler's Bag, then, with Franca's help, stored the Sword of Courage as well.
He then pulled Franca through the gray fog, returning to the slope leading to the ancient burial chamber.
As Lumian used his Hunter tracking abilities to search for Harrison, Franca employed divination methods for clues.
But after leaving the large burial chamber housing the Samaritan Woman's Spring, the visitor from Resurrection Island completely disappeared and managed to thwart their divination.
They stopped at the Krismona Night Pillar on the third level, exchanging glances.
Franca's lake-blue eyes revealed undisguised disappointment and regret. She sighed. "If I had known, I would have called Jenna to ambush him outside the chamber."
Lumian comforted Franca, "Given Harrison's displayed strength, we should be glad Jenna wasn't outside alone. She could have been discovered, attacked, and might not have lasted until we left the Samaritan Woman's Spring."
"That's true..." Franca sighed deeply.
Holding the white candle, she glanced around and translated the two lines of incantation for Lumian.
As Lumian lit a new candle, he pondered aloud, "Steal the secrets of heaven... He tried to steal my Traveler's Bag... Did he sense valuable items and thus saw through my concealment?
"It seems Harrison is more like a Beyonder of the Marauder pathway, yet he clearly uses powers of the Death pathway, and

quite powerful ones at that.
"The Marauders we've encountered before, even at Sequence 5 Dream Stealer, didn't show such capabilities, and Harrison obviously lacks godhood... A boost from the Celestial Worthy's mark?"
Franca thoughtfully said, "After the Demoness of Black told me the Primordial One can modify the abilities of different Sequences in the Demoness pathway to some extent, I wrote to Madam Judgment about it. She said it's not only true gods who can do such things; certain Kings of Angels can too. Amon, for instance, once altered the mystical knowledge and some abilities acquired in different Sequences of the Marauder pathway.
"Is Harrison exhibiting the original, full version?"
"That might be a reason, but I think some of his actions just now have surpassed Sequence 5. Even a full version Dream Stealer shouldn't manage that... The Resurrection Island's method of utilizing power and its manifestation differ significantly from the paths of the divine?" Lumian pondered aloud.

Chapter 862: Help

Holding the white candle, Franca thought for a while but couldn't figure out the situation. She walked towards the area outside the Krismona Night Pillar, saying solemnly, "No matter if it's because Resurrection Island has a special way of utilizing and manifesting power, or if Harrison is a Beyonder of the Marauder pathway, using the secrets of heaven to wield the Death pathway's power, or if he belongs to the Death pathway and uses the Celestial Worthy's mark or boons to display stealing abilities, we can't underestimate him. We need to report this immediately."

Lumian walked beside Franca, nodding. "If I don't use Sealed Artifacts, I'm not confident I can beat him. At the very least, I'm not sure I can capture or kill him, and he might also possess a Grade 1 Sealed Artifact."

"Fortunately, we encountered him today. If it were another time, when I was alone, a chance meeting would be much more dangerous." Franca sighed and changed the subject, "Does this mean the followers of the Celestial Worthy are truly involved in Project Vortex? What benefit could they gain?"

"The descent of an evil god?" Lumian speculated based on his knowledge and intelligence. "Or bringing about the apocalypse earlier?"

Franca's expression flickered in the dim candlelight, and she could only let out a long sigh.

Lumian moved forward, kicking away a silent, bony hand that reached out.

He exclaimed with excitement, "This is undoubtedly a very big vortex. We can't just rely on the Major Arcana card holders for help. We need to quickly improve our own strength to avoid being swept up and rendered powerless."

"Exactly," Franca agreed.

Lumian continued to look straight ahead, his voice unwavering, "You need to digest the Affliction potion as soon as possible, and I need to quickly bring Ludwig fully into the team."

Franca was taken aback and couldn't help but glance at Lumian's profile.

She hesitated for a moment, then asked carefully, "Are you saying this out of guilt? There's no need; we can think of other ways."

"Guilt is part of it, but it's not the main reason." Lumian continued forward without much change in expression.

Franca frowned slightly, looking at Lumian, and raised a question she had before meeting Harrison, "Why did you suddenly come to find me today and be so proactive? I thought I would have to

endure our awkward relationship until I couldn't take it anymore and had to seek you out."
Lumian chuckled."If I told you Jenna asked me to find you, would you believe it?"
Franca suddenly felt a bit stifled, not even sure why she felt this way or if it was for multiple reasons.
She muttered, "She asked, and you just came?"
Lumian smiled as if talking about something ordinary. "If I absolutely don't want to do something-sans the influence of mystical powers-there's only one person in this world who can force me to do it."
Franca knew who Lumian was referring to and understood what he meant.
The blockage in her heart eased a lot, but recalling certain things made her expression quite complicated. There was anger, bitterness, and a bit of joy.
She clenched her right fist, the one not holding the white candle, and punched Lumian's shoulder with considerable force, "You brat, you gave it away!"
Lumian took the punch stoically, as if he had anticipated it.
They walked in silence for a while. Franca, having adjusted her mood, curiously asked, "Actually, I wanted to ask earlier. Jenna had already found you and expressed her thoughts, and you said the best response was to delay until you became an Iron-blooded Knight. But in that situation, how could you delay? There was no way to delay anymore!"
Lumian glanced at Franca. "Find Anthony. Did you forget we have a Psychiatrist in our team?"
Franca chuckled awkwardly. "How can you discuss such matters with a Psychiatrist teammate you meet every day? It's too awkward! Jenna and I definitely can't talk to Anthony about this."
Lumian ignored Franca's excuse and continued, "With the help of a Psychiatrist, or even a Hypnotist's abilities, the issue could be delayed for a while. But fundamentally, this is an emotional problem, not a psychological or mental issue.
Using a Psychiatrist can delay it, but it can't be postponed forever. It will eventually erupt, so it's better to resolve it sooner."
Franca tersely responded.
After a few more steps, she looked at the darkness ahead and said in a calm but slightly joyful tone, "Do you know why I only punched you once?"
"No," Lumian replied frankly.
Franca smiled, feeling quite gratified.
"Previously, you always gave me a feeling that goals, power, and

close relationships were important, but you didn't care much about yourself, as if you didn't matter.
"This time, I originally thought you made all these decisions in that same mindset, but when you said you weren't entirely passive and had your own thoughts, even if just a bit, I was very happy."
Lumian did not respond but did not refute her either.
...
In Trier, Quartier de la Maison d'Opéra, in an underground room.
Anthony met with the Knight of Swords.
The Minor Arcana card holder still wore a white shirt and black vest, his brown hair slightly disheveled, and his eyes looked quite repressed.
At this moment, the Knight of Swords sat at a long table, with several playing cards covering different chairs.
After glancing at what seemed like the aftermath of a card game, Anthony, who had met the Knight of Swords in the Raklev region of the Southern Continent, politely greeted him.
The Knight of Swords responded briefly. After Anthony found a chair without cards in front of it and sat down, he spoke in a low voice, "I need your help with two things. One is to provide psychological treatment for a while to help stabilize my mental state."
"No problem." Anthony nodded gently.
He knew that Madam Justice and Madam Susie were not in Trier recently. It seemed they had left because there were traces of a dragon on the West Midseashire Coast, and a member of the Tamara family's Judgment branch in the Loen Kingdom had surfaced and expressed a desire to cooperate. Both ladies had been away for some time and wouldn't return soon. Among the Minor Arcana card holders in Trier, only he could provide psychological treatment to the Knight of Swords.
Maintaining his repressed state, the Knight of Swords continued, "The second thing is that we discovered some members of the indulgence faction seem to have brought a significant item to Trier. There are traces of a demigod among them.
"We have confirmed where these indulgence faction members are staying, but without knowing what the item is or if there are other powerful individuals hidden, we don't want to launch a rash attack.
"It's best not to involve the authorities in this. If the item is useful to us but falls into official hands, it would be quite troublesome.
"Every two or three days, a servant from their villa comes out to buy supplies. Of course, there's likely an indulgence faction member watching secretly, whose strength and level are

uncertain.
"We will handle distracting the indulgence faction member watching the servant.
You will find an opportunity to hypnotize the servant, ask two or three questions, and then hypnotize him to forget being questioned.
"The questioning time is short, and the risk is high. We can't guarantee your absolute safety, only that your safety will be our top priority.
"You can refuse, but if you agree, we will give you sufficient or exceptionally special compensation."
"Exceptionally special?" Anthony asked, slightly puzzled.
The Knight of Swords, Maric, took a shiny Loen gold pound from his pocket and said in a low voice, "I believe you recognize it."
Anthony immediately remembered the lucky coin Jenna and Ludwig had obtained.
After a moment's thought, he decided, "Alright, I will hypnotize the servant and handle the questioning, but you need to design the questions. I don't know what concerns you."
"Deal." The Knight of Swords showed a slight smile, but his eyes remained repressed.
Anthony looked at him and said, "Shall we start the first psychological treatment now?"
"Okay." The Knight of Swords nodded gently.
Anthony smiled peacefully.
"First, I must clarify that a Psychiatrist is not omnipotent. Sometimes, I can only help you find the right path. Other times, I can only provide some emotional relief, allowing you to view troubling matters more normally.
"Just as restraint is for crucial moments of release, if you never release, I can only help delay it for a while. Eventually, it will be uncontrollable."
...
Two days later, in a bustling market.
Anthony spotted his target, a man with evident Southern Continent ancestry.
Pretending to select fresh meat, he slowly approached the target.
According to the plan, the Knight of Swords and his team would now start distracting the indulgence faction member watching the servant. If they failed, they would use Wraith possession to inform him that today's mission was urgently canceled.
Soon, Anthony reached the target's side.
Suddenly, his eyes brightened as he bent down to pick up a Louis d'or from the ground.

After a moment's hesitation, he asked the servant beside him, "Sir, did you drop this?"
The servant looked over blankly, the gold coin's shine making him squint. At the same time, Anthony's eyes subtly turned vertical, tinged with a light gold hue.
The servant, completely focused on the gold coin, swallowed and said, "Yes, it's mine."
Thus, Anthony completed the hypnosis.
He handed the coin to the servant and asked casually, "What are they doing in the villa, never coming out?"
The servant hesitated, then replied, "They're in an orgy, all together. They're making babies, making babies!"

Chapter 863: Dancing with the Devil

Making babies? Anthony suddenly had a strong sense of foreboding.

He immediately abandoned the second question preset by the Knight of Swords and straightforwardly asked, "Who is making babies?"

The servant replied, his confusion tinged with fear. "Everyone is! The women are giving birth, and so are the men!"

Men are giving birth too... Anthony felt a shiver run down his spine and nearly used Placate himself.

He took another gold coin from his pocket and smiled at the servant.

"Did you forget you dropped another Louis d'or?"

The servant thought the Louis d'or's shine had entered the other man's eyes.

He assumed the man was trying to bribe him and hastily nodded.

"Yes, yes, I forgot."

As he spoke, the servant's thoughts became fuzzy, as if he heard something but also didn't.

When he came to his senses, he had forgotten what had just happened, and the Louis d'or in his hand was gone.

In an alley two streets away from the market, Anthony saw Maric, the Knight of Swords, reflected in a puddle left by last night's sudden rain.

Before the Knight of Swords could speak, Anthony quickly relayed the information he had gathered and then said, "The indulgence faction only indulges desires, not making babies. That's not their hallmark, right?"

The repression in the Knight of Swords' eyes had lessened slightly. He said gravely, "Followers of the Primordial Moon within the indulgence faction do occasionally, but not to the extent where even men give birth."

Anthony said in a serious tone, "Based on the behavior of those indulgence faction members, their bringing a significant item to Trier, the brewing of Project Vortex, and the fact that its leaders are Brokers who worship an evil god, I suspect that the Mother Tree of Desire worshiped by the indulgence faction and the Great Mother worshiped by the Nightstalkers have started collaborating on something, which is a crucial part of Project Vortex!"

Since the Knight of Swords had come to Trier, he naturally knew about Project Vortex from his Major Arcana card holder. He replied in a low voice, "Your suspicion is alarming. I will immediately report this to Ma'am Hermit and the higher-ups of our faction. If

necessary, we will take decisive action."
Anthony nodded. "It would be best to inform the authorities as well. In Trier, no one is better suited to handle this than them. I need to return to my companions and warn them to be on guard against the coming vortex!"
With that, Anthony was about to leave the alley. "My companion will take you to find the Seven of Wands; it will be faster this way," the Knight of Swords called out to Anthony. "We will give you the promised reward once the situation stabilizes."
The Minor Arcana card holder quickly vanished from the puddle's surface.
He was eager to write to his Major Arcana card holder, The Hermit.
...
In the Quartier de la Cathédrale Commémorative, Apartment 702 on 9 Rue Orosai.
Franca and Jenna were squeezed together on the sofa, comparing the Loen gold pounds in their hands.
"I can feel they are somewhat special, but I don't know what makes them special," Franca said happily.
She then looked up at Lumian, who had taken her spot.
"Mr. Star's reward is this, haha, now you're the only one without one!"
Lumian found it amusing and remarked, "Did you forget about Anthony? And Lugano doesn't have one either."
Jenna glanced at Franca, who was leaning on her, and said thoughtfully, "When I first got the lucky coin, I thought it was a gift, but after you and Ludwig got yours, I began to suspect they might be symbols or tokens. We might all experience something together in the future.
"Lumian is special in many ways; he will get involved sooner or later, and he will get a coin eventually."
"At least he doesn't have one now," Franca said, showing off her lucky coin.
After discussing this for a while, Franca put away her lucky coin and asked Lumian about the serious matter, "How is Ludwig's 'training' going?"
"He follows my orders well now. The next step is to go through some experiences together to build rapport with you all," Lumian thought for a moment. "I'll design tasks accordingly. With a small team, it should take two or three weeks to achieve this."
"I'll probably finish digesting the Affliction potion before your advancement. The main issue now is convincing the Demoness of Black that I can digest it so quickly." In the past few days, Franca's progress in digesting the Affliction potion had advanced

significantly, and she estimated she needed only about a week more.
Jenna fell silent for a moment before saying, "My Pleasure potion is fully digested. I just need a couple of days to prepare for the ritual to become a Demoness of Affliction."
"So soon?" Franca exclaimed in surprise.
Jenna looked at Franca with a complex expression but did not answer.
Franca was stunned for a moment, then said, "Oh."
She understood why, which made her feelings even more complicated, with a mix of bitterness, sadness, joy, and smugness.
"I have given Jenna the potion ingredients and the remaining Ice Lemon Fish fillet," Lumian added.
"Okay." Franca quickly adjusted her mindset.
Feeling Jenna leaning against her, smelling her fragrance, and looking at Lumian, who had taken her spot and was mimicking her sitting posture, Franca suddenly felt that the past couple of days had been quite enjoyable and reassuring. Except for occasional pain and sadness, everything was great. Lumian was even expressing his importance to her more actively, though not much.
Since her transmigration, it was the first time Franca had felt this way.
Well, well, let's just say I've built a harem, except... Franca sighed inwardly.
She hoped these times would last longer, and that the vortex and the apocalypse would never come.
At that moment, Lumian turned his head and looked towards the side door of the living room.
Anthony's figure quickly took shape there.
"I have important information," Anthony said directly.
Lumian stood up from the armchair and gestured for Anthony to continue.
Anthony quickly relayed the information he had gathered from the servant and his own speculations.
During this, Jenna and Franca, the two Demonesses, both had a premonition of danger from their spirituality.
Lumian said without hesitation, "I'll inform Madam Magician immediately, then meet up with Ludwig and Lugano and move to a new safe house. We'll wait for instructions from the Major Arcana card holders."
...
Above the endless gray fog, in an ancient and majestic palace.
On either side of a mottled bronze table, figures shrouded in gray

fog quickly formed.
There were eight of them.
The seats at the head and foot of the table were empty.
Miss Justice stood up, looked around, and said, "This is an emergency meeting with Mr. Fool's permission."
Madam Magician did not waste time. Once Miss Justice sat down, she immediately asked Mr. Star across from her, "Was it your idea or a hint from the Church of Evernight to send the Two of Cups to fetch water from the Samaritan Woman's Spring?"
Mr. Star sat upright this time.
"It was a revelation I received in a dream."
"A dream... Is the Evernight Goddess reminding us to pay attention to Harrison?
Yes, She should know that Harrison has entered and exited the Samaritan Woman's Spring several times and mastered the pattern..." Madam Magician did not ask further and turned to Ma'am Hermit on her side, "Has Queen Mystic conveyed any information?"
Ma'am Hermit shook her head, then said after recalling, "She hasn't contacted me for a while. I tried to reach her a couple of days ago but received no response..."
As she spoke, Ma'am Hermit suddenly paused, foreseeing a scene.
Then, she saw the gaze of Mr. Hanged Man, Mr. Moon, Mr. Sun, and Madam Judgment all fall on her, their expressions solemn and their eyes full of undisguised vigilance.
...
Tossed high into the air by a storm, then slammed back into the vortex of the sea, the Dawn struggled to maintain its balance, like a toy thrown into the ocean.
There was not a single sailor on its deck; the sails and ropes moved on their own as if controlled by invisible hands.
After a long time, the storm finally subsided, and the Dawn, the flagship of Queen Mystic, soon stabilized.
Ahead, an island covered in dark green, nearly black, giant trees slowly emerged under the blue sky and white clouds.
Wearing a floral shirt and a brown captain's coat, Queen Mystic- Bernadette- stepped out of the cabin and walked to the bow.
Her blue eyes were as deep as the ocean, her straight eyebrows extended gracefully, and her naturally flowing chestnut hair reached her waist. She wore pants and boots for ease of movement.
Empty-handed, Queen Mystic gazed at the island, her eyes darkening, her face expressionless.
As the island drew nearer, another person emerged from the

cabin.
This person was also a woman, with black hair and brown eyes, a pretty face, and the typical appearance of a Loenese. She wore a dark robe with many pockets and different flowers embroidered on it, a favorite outfit of ancient merchants.
Overseer Perle!
This evil god worshiper and initiator of Project Vortex appeared on Queen Mystic's ship!
Perle walked to the bow and stood beside Bernadette, also gazing at the island, a clear smile on her face.

Chapter 864: Center of the Vortex

Quartier 14, within the botanical garden, there stood a wooden cabin belonging to the caretaker.

Lumian had prepared this safe house before heading to Morora. He hadn't rented it; instead, he used money to persuade the garden caretaker to vacate the place whenever needed and to pretend he still lived there.

Franca glanced at the lush trees surrounding them, then turned her gaze back to Ludwig, who was sitting at a small wooden table, munching on a donut. She asked with a playful smile, "How about I give you some homework?"

Ludwig looked up quickly, eyeing Franca warily and instinctively scooting back.

Franca laughed immediately, muttering to herself, I feeI an Angel's pain, and my Affliction potion has digested a bit more!

"Why are you bullying a child?" Jenna asked, amused by the scene.

"What child?" Franca explained with a grin, "I had suspected that making Ludwig experience the pain of studying and doing homework might help me digest the potion, but I didn't try it for fear of ruining Lumian's 'training' and making Ludwig want to run away from home. Now, with the vortex possibly approaching, I need to digest as much as I can. Besides, it's not like Ludwig will bond with us that quickly anyway."

Ludwig's brown eyes clearly conveyed one message as he looked at Franca: You Demoness!

Jenna thought carefully and realized Franca's reasoning made sense. Once Lumian completed his advancement and she herself reached the stage of the Demoness of Affliction, this could be one of the ways to digest the potion.

Ludwig's gaze flicked between Franca and Jenna before he spoke in a determined tone, "I will do my best to build rapport with you all!"

"Not bad," Lumian clapped his hands, then said to Franca and Jenna, "You two have the potential to be Conspirers. Now Ludwig doesn't mind teaming up with you."

I didn't expect it to turn out this way... Franca looked around, sensing that Lugano and Anthony's gazes seemed to say, "Look, you've driven the kid to this point."

Lumian tossed a chocolate coin to Ludwig and asked thoughtfully, "After eating that Chef's stomach, you should have recalled quite a bit of knowledge, right?"

Ludwig quickly unwrapped the chocolate and answered honestly, "Yes!"

This training is quite effective... Franca was a little surprised and

looked at Lumian with admiration.
Lumian pulled up a chair and asked in a coaxing tone, "Do you know anything about the Broker pathway? What do they mean by 'vortex'?"
Busy with training Ludwig and giving him tasks, Lumian had nearly overlooked that Ludwig was an Angel from beyond the barrier and might know something about the Broker pathway.
After learning about Project Vortex, Lumian had asked Ludwig a similar question before going to Morora, but Ludwig had shaken his head, saying he had no recollection. Now, he had recovered some memories and was much more obedient.
Chewing on the chocolate, Ludwig fell into deep thought.
After a few seconds, he said uncertainly, "It seems to involve more complex transactions, with multiple traders, not just one-on-one deals."
As he spoke, Ludwig took a stack of bread slices from the side and laid them out on the table, representing different traders.
He then pointed to the bread slices and said, "Transactions can occur between any of these groups, or there can be three-way, four-way, or even more parties involved. Connecting the corresponding lines creates a web or a vortex, involving many people."
Lumian understood Ludwig's meaning and pondered, "It seems the transaction between the Mother Tree of Desire and the Great Mother is just one part of the vortex. So where is the center of the vortex?"
...
In the square district, outside a villa where several members of the Rose School of Thought's indulgence faction lived.
Angoulême de Frangois and a group of Purifiers had arrived nearby.
For this mission, he had borrowed a Sealed Artifact from the Inquisition in the market district-his preferred Grade 1 Sealed Artifact, the Sword of the Sun, which was now embedded in the spine of a gray-white humanoid mechanical creation.
Angoulême looked up at the sky, where white clouds floated and the sun wasn't too intense. He glanced around and said, "Squad A, enter with me. Squad B, ambush underground. Squad C, go to the back door..."
After instructing his team, he spread his arms slightly and said, "Saint Vieve and Saint Plessy are watching us. We will surely be victorious! Praise the Sun!"
"Praise the Sun!" every Purifier responded.
Once the squads were in position, Angoulême, wearing a brown

wool coat, moved from stillness to motion and charged towards the villa, with the gray-white humanoid mechanical creation following closely.
For this mission, which might involve a demigod from the Rose School of Thought, Angoulême was not too worried. The Archbishop of Trier, Saint Plessy, and the Guardian Angel of Trier, Saint Vive, were not just watching but were also nearby, ready to purify the evil. The main goal was to force the bloody members of the Rose School of Thought out of hiding. If necessary, They could destroy the entire villa, purifying both the Beyonders and the ordinary people who worshiped evil gods together.
Although Angoulême believed that some of the ordinary people might still have a chance to be saved-some might not be deeply devoted to the Mother Tree of Desire-their rescue depended on ensuring the safety of his team.
As the captain, his primary responsibility was to his subordinates!
Angoulême was the first to rush through the garden and reach the front door of the villa.
Just then, he saw a white, thin mist rising inside, twisting and turning to form faces of agony that seemed almost real on the glass windows and walls.
Angoulême stopped and prepared to summon Light of Holiness to purify the mist.
Suddenly, deep within the thin white mist, in a room on the second floor of the villa, crimson moonlight began to glow.
It quickly outlined a stiff, sluggish, twisted, and blurry figure.
For some reason, upon seeing the crimson figure, Angoulême and his team felt a sense of awe at an ultimate beauty.
They gazed obsessively at the crimson figure slowly approaching the window, completely forgetting their mission.
They heard the cries of babies in their ears.
Along with the cries came a sinister, genderless voice: "You're just in time."
...
In the depths of a primitive island, where the trees suddenly disappeared.
Relying on the help of someone to circumvent her father's "ban," Queen Mystic Bernadette once again saw the black mausoleum built into the hollowed-out mountain.
Most of the mausoleum was part of the mountain itself, with some artificial traces. There were no weeds or vines on its surface. It stood over a hundred meters tall, majestic and grand.
This was where Bernadette's father, the former Emperor of the Intis Empire, Roselle Gustav, who had created an era, lay in eternal

rest.
Engraved on the mausoleum's surface were the Civil Code established and promulgated by Roselle, along with his new social customs and inventions.
In his later years, Roselle had forcefully switched from the Mystery Pryer pathway to the Lawyer pathway, attempting to become the Black Emperor of Sequence 0, but had perished during the apotheosis ritual.
This was an intentional outcome because he had suffered severe, hidden corruption after visiting the moon in his later years. He considered using the Black Emperor's characteristics of eternal tombs and undying order to escape the corruption.
However, after his death, the Beyonder characteristics belonging to the Mystery Pryer and Savant pathways would completely separate, and if he were to be resurrected, only the pure Black Emperor characteristics would be summoned back to his body, preventing him from becoming a half-mad entity like the Blood Emperor of the Fourth Epoch who had forcibly switched pathways.
Unfortunately, despite completing the Black Emperor ritual and gaining the rank of a true god, Roselle found that the hidden corruption could not be escaped even in death.
It kept regenerating.
Thus, Roselle, neither fully dead nor truly alive, sealed himself to prevent being completely altered by the corruption.
Bernadette had visited this Black Emperor mausoleum once before, using the abilities of a Grade 0 Sealed Artifact and Mr. Fool's help to further seal and protect her father.
She came today to use the method of multiple corruptions entangling each other to achieve balance, hoping to free her father from his current state and revive him. Afterward, she could wait for Mr. Fool to awaken and perform the best seal on the corruption. This way, even if it wasn't Mr. Fool who awakened but rather The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings, her father could barely maintain himself through his own balance.
For this, she was willing to push some gray transactions. She had also prepared extensively based on her foresight to prevent the situation from deteriorating.
This time, Bernadette encountered no obstacles or attacks like before and smoothly reached her father's mausoleum.
This confirmed one of the traders the Broker Perle had roped in.
And this trade might involve more than two parties!
"You can now perform the ritual to let the desired corruption enter the mausoleum," Overseer Perle said with a smile to Queen Mystic Bernadette. "But I need the Magic Wishing Lamp as a medium."

0-05, the Magic Wishing Lamp!
Bernadette replied calmly, "That wasn't part of the deal."
Perle sighed with a smile.
"It would make the ritual simpler and more effective.
"But it's okay. The trade you facilitated to bring me here has pleased my master, and I have received a new boon. I can try to complete the ritual on my own with the corresponding items."
As she spoke, Perle spread her arms, her body gradually turning into white mist.
The mist expanded, slowly rotating to form a vortex.

Chapter 865: The Traders

As clusters of gray-white crystals were enveloped by the mist and disintegrated, blending into it, Perle's white mist expanded rapidly into a gigantic, peculiar vortex.

Within the vortex, the Overseer's face flickered in and out of view, sometimes distorted, sometimes normal.

She looked up at the sky, her voice becoming ethereal, and spoke using the Words of Order, "Bernadette offers the location of Roselle's mausoleum on the primitive island, the place for the vortex ritual, and some materials in exchange for a gray trade. She requests that the great Uncertain Mist bestow a blessing upon Roselle, bringing balance to the corruption within Him."

As soon as Perle finished speaking, a light appeared within the white vortex.

Within the light was a deep, dark void, at the center of which was a solid, massive planet shrouded in layers of ever-changing white mist.

Suddenly, a wisp of white mist that could envelop the planet detached itself and moved towards the edge of the light, as if encountering an invisible barrier.

That wisp of white mist spread out, becoming intangible, and then, using the power of the ritual, a medium containing the truth, and the cracks in the invisible barrier, it penetrated magically, merging with the white mist that Perle had become, landing on her sometimes grim, sometimes smiling, blurred face.

The two fused into one.

Then, a large part of the white mist that Perle had transformed into separated and flowed like a river towards the black mausoleum built into the hollowed-out mountain, seeping inside continuously.

Queen Mystic Bernadette turned her back on the mausoleum.

Her chestnut hair suddenly parted, and a pair of cold, merciless, transparent eyes grew at the back of her head. Other facial features slowly formed around these eyes, blurring together.

It seemed like another her was emerging.

Through this, Bernadette glimpsed several scenes inside the black mausoleum, confirming that her father, Roselle, was being enveloped by the white mist.

The mist slowly eroded Roselle's body, beginning to distort the constantly regenerating corruption, slowing it down.

Likewise, it distorted the force that rapidly killed the new corruption.

Due to the difference in quantity between the white mist

corruption and the original corruption, it would take some time to maintain the ritual to achieve true balance.
At this moment, the mid-morning sun in the blue sky with white clouds suddenly blazed intensely, as if sensing the dangerous gray trade happening on this primitive island.
With the white mist strengthened by the wisp from the light, Perle's face became more blurred and abstract, the corresponding mist expanding to completely envelop the treeless area, though it did not approach Bernadette or the black mausoleum.
One by one, points of light appeared within the mist.
Perle's distorted face turned to one of these points of light and, in an even more ethereal and elusive voice, said, "The great Supernova Dominator agrees to intervene fully, suppressing the barrier so that all true gods in the astral world cannot interfere with the matters inside the barrier..."
Before Perle could finish speaking, a blinding light suddenly emerged within the point of light she was gazing at, bright enough to devour all darkness and blind an Angel.
With this change, the sky was illuminated as if a flashbang had been thrown into a dark room.
Even Perle, protected by the ritual, had to close her eyes.
Neither she nor Queen Mystic Bernadette could see the high sky becoming void, with a transparent barrier full of cracks deep within the void.
Within that void, there was a drawn sun, a gigantic entity shrouded in dense darkness, a terrifying figure surrounded by a storm of lightning, a pair of brass-colored eyes opening within the cracks, a corner filled with wheat, flowers, and springs, and a faint glow presenting vague scenes of civilization...
A massive, heavy, and profound "fireball" crashed heavily onto the invisible barrier with many cracks, exploding with a dazzling light that illuminated the void completely, making the abstract patterns seem nearly transparent.
This didn't cause widespread earthquakes within the barrier; it merely temporarily blinded people.
In the white mist, Perle's face, with closed eyes, continued speaking with the Words of Order, "What He needs in return is for the seal on the ship beneath Port Santa to be broken."
As soon as Perle finished speaking, one of the points of light grew slightly, showing a scene of the deep blue sea.
Finally, the bright light penetrating the barrier became less dazzling, and Perle opened her eyes, looking at the deep blue sea within the point of light. In an ethereal voice, she said, "Topsy of the School of Deliciousness is willing to pay this price..."

As Perle spoke, a terrifying vortex suddenly formed in the deep blue sea.
A monster emerged from the vortex, towering dozens or hundreds of meters high, with a lower body resembling a giant snake covered in shark-like skin with hidden evil patterns. The upper body split into nine necks, each with a different head-some resembling snakes, some like giant sharks, some with wet black wolf heads, some possibly of legendary dragons...
The most bizarre central head appeared human but had only a mouth left, with teeth sharp enough to crush anything.
This head lunged at the invisible force sealing the sea, biting it furiously, while the other heads either devoured the fish in the sea, spewed venom at the seal, or tried to use their abilities to affect the seal...
"What he needs is..." Perle's voice reached Queen Mystic Bernadette's ears through the white mist, "for the Angel of the great Primordial Hunger to return!"
Outside the white mist, Bernadette had conjured an ancient-style spear. This spear had appeared in ancient times and was stained with the blood of a great being, covered in dark red spots and stains, seemingly capable of harming true gods.
Mystical Re-enactment, Spear of Longinus!
Bernadette hurled the spear emitting a destructive aura into the white mist, not targeting Perle but the point of light that had grown larger.
She intended to stop the subsequent gray trades, preventing the vortex from spinning further and causing real harm. After all, she had achieved her goal, and maintaining it for a while longer would suffice!
The Spear of Longinus pierced the white mist, hitting the point of light showing the deep blue sea.
However, it didn't dim or extinguish the point of light, as if it had struck a phantom.
As the ancient spear dissipated, Perle's exaggeratedly smiling face turned towards Bernadette.
"The vortex has formed; unless you kill me, it won't stop.
"And if I die now, Roselle won't achieve true balance, and the broken fragile balance won't be restored."
Bernadette froze.
Perle then looked at another point of light and, in an ethereal voice, said, "Offering help to Topsy of the School of Deliciousness is Mr. Higdon of the Order of All Extinction."
The point of light Perle was gazing at grew slightly, revealing a luxurious room.

In the room, an elderly man with neatly combed graying hair sat quietly on an antique armchair.
He wore a crisp white shirt and black suit with a gray bow tie, his handsome but stern face showing intermittent festering and oozing from exposed skin, with maggots crawling out occasionally.
His deep, magnetic voice reached the white mist and Perle's face: "But I don't know where the target is in Trier."
Perle's twisted smile widened, her gaze shifting to another point of light at an angle above.
That point of light grew, revealing a dimly lit room with closed doors and windows.
Sunlight streamed in through the glass windows, illuminating countless dust particles floating in the air.
Below the dust was an old wooden loom, with a black-haired woman sitting beside it, her hair reaching her waist.
The woman had an ethereal demeanor and delicate features but kept her eyes shut, constantly pulling out her hair and weaving it into the threads on the loom.
Tears of pus-laden blood streamed from her eyes, her left arm severed and fallen to the ground, her skirt covering her empty legs, with a graceful female statue standing behind her. The statue, originally faceless, gradually grew features resembling the woman's.
The hair-threads on the loom shimmered with faint light, containing a wealth of information.
Seemingly hearing Overseer Perle's question, the woman brushed her fingers over several black hair-threads on the loom.
The threads she touched lit up, revealing the corresponding information: "The indulgence faction of the Rose School of Thought brought the Shadow of the Beauty Goddess to Trier, trying to get as close as possible to Fourth Epoch Trier. They did it covertly, avoiding detection by Trier's demigods..."
"The temperance faction of the Church of The Fool discovered the indulgence faction's movements and the presence of an important item early but hesitated to act immediately. They waited for the right moment to complete their investigation, missing the opportunity..."
"Lumian Lee and Ludwig moved to a safe house in District 14's botanical garden in Trier. If he knew how immense this vortex would be, he would have regretted not teleporting directly to the New City of Silver with his companions. But how could he have known?"
These intertwined destinies formed a foreseeable future.
Overseer Perle's ethereal voice echoed in the room, "The founder of

the Dreamseekers, Fate's Attendant, Héloise, is responsible for weaving the entire matter, ensuring it progresses smoothly without alerting higher beings. She will also provide the locations of two Angels..."

As Perle spoke, the woman named Héloise plucked a strand of destiny thread representing Lumian and Ludwig moving to the new safe house.

A bit of light jumped out, splitting into three fragments that entered the white mist transformed by Perle and flew in different directions.

Chapter 866: The Painting

In Trier, within the botanical garden, inside the wooden house.

Lumian and the others were blinded by the sudden bright light from the sky, unable to open their eyes for a full minute.

Ludwig was the first to recover. He ran to the window and looked out at the plants, as if searching for something.

Lumian was the second to recover. He frowned and said to Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, "Is this the start of the vortex? It's quite a commotion."

"I wonder if it will affect us," Franca said just as a strong sense of danger washed over her.

In such matters, Demonesses always had keen intuition.

Almost simultaneously, Jenna exclaimed, "It will definitely affect us! I have a feeling we can't stay here any longer!"

Lumian paused for a moment, then quickly whispered, "Termiboros, you didn't warn me because what's about to happen is something you want to see?"

As he spoke, Lumian signaled to Franca, Jenna, Anthony, and Lugano to come closer. They each grabbed his arm, shoulder, and vest.

The only one who lacked the tacit understanding was Ludwig.

Lumian looked at the young boy and said sternly, "Do you want to be punished with homework? Get over here!"

Ludwig's face showed fear, and he instinctively turned his body. But the next second, he reluctantly looked back out the window.

He didn't know what he was waiting for; he just felt he should stay here, waiting for something very important.

"Hmm?" Lumian urged again.

Ludwig's expression changed, and he finally couldn't resist the authority of his godfather and his fear of schoolwork and exams. He ran over to Lumian, grabbing his black vest.

Still lacking tacit understanding, the ritual can't be considered complete... Lumian sighed inwardly and activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

He needed to teleport this large group to the New City of Silver, to the headquarters of the Church of The Fool!

Lumian saw layers of dense colors and countless transparent, strange figures, along with the seven pure, bright lights always far overhead.

He was about to travel through the familiar spirit world to the coordinates representing the New City of Silver when his body suddenly felt heavy, pulling him away from this fantastical, mysterious, mad, and illusory world.

Lumian found himself and the others back in the wooden house within the botanical garden, in the same state as when Ludwig had just grabbed his vest.
With his extensive experience, Lumian's eyes narrowed, and he warned his companions, Franca and Jenna, "Circle Inhabitant!"
...
Outside Emperor Roselle's mausoleum on the primitive island, in the area in front of the tomb shrouded in thin white mist.
The three pieces of information that flew out from the point of light where Fate's Attendant Héloise was located landed on three different points of light.
One was where Higdon of the Order of All Extinction was, another seemed to be inside a tunnel under Trier, where a figure holding a carbide lamp, dressed in a black robe, and looking different from those from the Northern and Southern Continents, was the visitor from Easter Island named Harrison.
The third point of light first showed darkness, then outlined a figure. This figure was in his fifties, with a thick head of hair with a hint of white, and clear, deep lake-blue eyes.
He was a man with neatly trimmed facial hair, and his features were well-defined.
Even at his age, he could be considered handsome.
Voisin Sanson!
Circle Inhabitant of the Sinners, Voisin Sanson!
The father of Roche Louise Sanson, the original identity of Aurore, a follower of Inevitability, Voisin Sanson!
As soon as Voisin Sanson, dressed in a black suit, received the information about Lumian, Ludwig, and the others' location, he disappeared into the darkness of the expanding point of light.
Higdon of the Order of All Extinction also quickly left his room, no longer participating in this real-time, complex trade without physical distance.
Overseer Perle showed no surprise at this. With her ethereal voice, she announced the progress of the trade, "Voisin Sanson of the Sinners has obtained crucial information about the recovery of the Inevitability Angel. The corresponding price will be paid by the great Circle of Inevitability.
"Mr. Higdon of the Order of All Extinction has begun his actions. The reward will be given after he completes the recovery of the Angel of Primordial Hunger and provides some assistance to Voisin Sanson, paid by Loki of April Fool's..."
As Perle's words spread, and with the invocation of those honorific names, the area around the white mist grew increasingly dim and uncertain, shadows rising as if a terrifying will was about to

descend.
Normally, Perle shouldn't have known or spoken of information regarding great beings, as it would bring extremely terrible and severe consequences. After all, after convincing the gray-leaning Queen Mystic Bernadette with previous events, she had only received a new blessing through a substantial sacrifice, becoming a true Vortex Weaver, but not yet reaching the rank of an Angel.
However, she was currently under the protection of the vortex ritual and had just accepted a wisp of mist transmitted by her faith's truth, the Uncertain Mist, allowing her to remain unaffected. Her understanding of those great beings came from that wisp of mist, previously only contacting corresponding secret organizations and underground cults to reach relatively certain agreements.
At this moment, Bernadette disintegrated herself into strands of information, surging towards Perle's face within the gray mist in a vast torrent.
She hoped to influence the other party in this way, preventing the subsequent trades from progressing but without destroying the current ritual.
Perle's face, composed of mist, suddenly dispersed, disappearing from Bernadette's perception.
The vast torrent of information surged forward, seemingly lost in the white mist, unable to find the true location of the target.
Soon, the torrent of information separated from the white mist and reformed Bernadette's body. Perle's face then reappeared in different parts of the white mist, sometimes smiling, sometimes cursing, sometimes pretending to be friendly, sometimes babbling.
These faces converged inward, once again forming Perle's sometimes distorted, sometimes normal blurred face within the depths of the white mist.
Perle continued speaking with the Words of Order, "Harrison from Easter Island has received information about Lumian Lee's location. After the vortex ritual ends, he will use the special mirror world to visit Fourth Epoch Trier, paying a special item of the Fate pathway as a reward.
"This is the item Fate's Attendant Madam Héloise wishes to obtain..."
As Perle announced the new trade, a half-body figure that was nearly transparent and quite ethereal grew from Bernadette's back. This figure looked identical to Bernadette, even in clothing. She held a pale mask with only holes for the eyes, shining with a metallic luster, and quickly put it on.
Pale Death!

Another Grade 0 Sealed Artifact Sealed Artifact owned by Bernadette, Pale Death!
She intended to use this to control Perle.
At that moment, Bernadette's vision blurred suddenly, and the surrounding environment and distances became exceptionally chaotic.
She was passively shifted in position, hearing an unusually familiar deep voice in her ear: "Bernadette..."
...
Outside the Black Emperor's mausoleum, within the increasingly dense and varied white mist.
In an underground location somewhere in Trier, within his corresponding point of light, Harrison took out an item.
It was a thumb-sized, colorful bead with a glass-like texture, exuding a calming aura.
Harrison then threw the bead into the surrounding white mist.
Under Overseer Perle's gaze, the bead passed through Harrison's corresponding point of light, through the dense white mist, and into the point of light where Dreamseeker founder-Héloise-was.
The delicate woman weaving fate caught the colorful, glass-like bead with her remaining right hand.
Her tightly shut eyes suddenly saw a scene: A bald man in a yellow robe with a strange cape sat cross-legged on a bed, a halo of pure light behind his head. Deep within the halo seemed to lead to the unknown, hiding many things.
Héloise put down the bead, pulled out another strand of hair, and completed the last bit of her task.
It was a blessing.
A blessing from fate!
"Project Vortex will be successfully completed."
Héloise's black hair carried this message, woven into the previous threads.
With a swish, a large piece of skin on the right half of Héloise's face was torn off by an invisible force, revealing the bloody, wriggling flesh beneath.
She had not yet become an Angel and could not normally weave such far-reaching fate. She could only forcefully complete it with the goddess's statue, but each weave brought severe damage. Her eyes had gone blind in the process, and her feet, legs, left arm, and fingers had also been broken.
Of course, as long as she did not die on the spot, she could obtain special medicine for treatment through transactions with Brokers.
Overseer Perle's face in the white mist turned her gaze to another point of light.

This point of light showed a scene of an altar inside an ancient castle, surrounded by intact but lifeless bodies, their flesh and bones made into brushes and paints.
A man with long hair, empty eyes, and a frenzied expression had completed the preliminary preparations at the center of the altar.
It was a nearly finished, eerie oil painting, just two strokes away from completion.
The painting depicted an endless, dark starry sky with blood-red circles on the left, resembling a special tunnel or a creature's mouth. On the right, numerous silver-white and black flickered from bone powder, just short of forming a ring.
Overseer Perle's voice resonated.
"The string believer, Mr. Sage of the Fantasy Association, has sacrificed many bestowed and followers and is about to complete a magnificent and outstanding painting!
"Next, we will witness the unveiling of that painting. Mr. Sage's reward will be personally given by the great Uncertain Mist at the end of the vortex ritual, which is also what the great being he believes in wants to see."

Chapter 867: Exerting Influence

The man known as Mr. Sage used a brush made of bone and hair, dipped it into the paint made from flesh and blood, and painstakingly applied it to the depths of the blood-red circles.

Perle's ethereal voice sounded once again.

"This is an outstanding painting representing the endless cosmos. Once completed, it will allow two great beings to transmit a bit of Their power into the barrier. Although this cannot be used for targeted attacks or corruption, it can exert more universal influence according to predetermined rules..."

Before Perle could finish speaking, Mr. Sage, with his long hair and vacant eyes, finally pressed the human hair and bone brush onto the predetermined spot.

His right side suddenly melted like a candle, with flesh flowing towards the brush, racing into the depths of the blood-red circles. lt seemed as though it really connected to the endless cosmos, where no matter how much flesh accumulated, it eventually vanished.

Mr. Sage, left with only half a body and half a head, still had not died. He caught the falling brush with his left hand.

On the oil painting, a pin-sized dot appeared in the depths of the blood-red circles.

It was dark, as if a sound was emanating from it.

Perle's face in the white mist announced the results of the trade with the Words of Order, "The great Inextinguishable Ravings has transmitted the First Philosophy, allowing the Immortal Voice to penetrate the barrier in small amounts. These will be received by all who can hear unknown and mystical voices. The higher the Sequence, the greater the impact!

"And some faithful followers of the First Philosophy will, after the vortex ritual is truly over, approach the remnants of the Knowledge Moor in Fourth Epoch Trier with the help of the Mirror People..."

...

Trier, at the real residence of Professor and Associate Professor.

Just recovering from the sudden burst of brilliant light and barely able to see their surroundings, Professor and Associate Professor were worried about the current anomalies. They discussed whether to take the children to the small sacrificial square in the underground catacombs, their expressions changing.

Instinctively, they raised their hands to cover their ears, but their facial muscles still twisted, and the veins on their temples bulged and throbbed.

They heard an indescribable strange sound, causing both physical and mental anguish.
In their pain, Professor and Associate Professor exchanged glances, seeing the confusion in each other's eyes.
This wasn't the voice of the Hidden Sage!
This was an unprecedented situation for Professor and Associate Professor.
Although they occasionally discovered some mysterious sounds while researching Warlock spells and exploring certain special scenarios, aside from the indoctrination by the Hidden Sage, they had never encountered such unannounced sounds. Moreover, even without carefully distinguishing the content of the sounds, they suffered severe effects.
Fortunately, compared to the indoctrination of the Hidden Sage, this seemed more bearable and did not push them to the brink of losing control.
Most Beyonders of the Mystery Pryer pathway, upon hearing these mysterious terrifying sounds, witnessed a phantom light composed of complex information writhing madly like a shedding giant snake in an unknown place.
...
In the basement of the house where the Psychic magazine was located.
Mr. K, wearing a black robe and hood, suddenly stood up from the red-backed chair.
The veins on the back of his exposed hands had turned black, writhing like insects.
"No, no..." Mr. K muttered in pain, "It's not the Lord's voice!"
He suddenly shouted, pulling off his hood and sticking his fingers into his ears.
Mr. K's face had completely twisted, making his original appearance unrecognizable. He continually muttered in a voice filled with more mental agony than physical pain: "It's not the Lord's voice! It's not the Lord's voice!"
Amidst the grating sound, Mr. K used both hands to tear off his ears, the ripped flesh grotesque and terrifying.
It wasn't enough!
Mr. K forcefully inserted his fingers into his ear canals, puncturing his eardrums and clogging his ear passages.
Yet, he still heard the sound.
He prostrated, lying on the ground, and tearfully repented to his Lord.
As he repented, he vomited clumps of blood-stained organs.
Similar to Mr. K, some Angels, Saints, and Oracles of the Aurora

Order also suffered intense and painful effects, making it difficult to follow the Lord's commands to stop something.
...
In the Forsaken Land of the Gods.
A majestic mountain range was surrounded by strange light, with dense darkness at its core.
At the edge of the light, various twisted shadows continued to form, rushing madly like moths into the darkness at the center.
The darkness occasionally split open, revealing a gaze from behind the veil.
...
On the bloody altar in the ancient castle, Mr. Sage pressed the human hair and bone brush into a pile of silver-black bone powder made from some unknown substance.
The painter, now only half a body and half a head, twisted the brush forcefully, then raised it, aiming it at the last unfinished part of the "Endless Cosmos" oil painting.
As the brush fell, Mr. Sage's remaining half-body and half-head also began to melt like a candle.
Soon, the brush, carrying the painter, completed the silver-black ring.
Almost simultaneously, the ring became ethereal, as if scratched, and seemed to merge into the air.
Three faint figures appeared on the silver-black ring, constantly changing positions as if eternally chasing each other.
The "Endless Cosmos" oil painting was completed, but Mr. Sage would never see this work.
Overseer Perle's voice sounded once more: "The great Circle of Inevitability has gazed upon this. All external forces attempting to interfere with Project Vortex will inevitably fail, except for the participants themselves."
...
Above the blue sea, in the sky where the strong light had driven away the white clouds.
Madam Magician, dressed in a women's shirt and brown ankle-length skirt, appeared with Miss Justice and Ma'am Hermit.
The latter not only wore her usual glasses but also had layers of dazzling starlight covering her ears.
When the mysterious, terrifying, and unknown sound appeared earlier, Madam Magician had sealed Ma'am Hermit's listening abilities in both the literal and mystical senses.
Although this could not completely isolate the sound's influence, it significantly reduced its effect, allowing Ma'am Hermit to perform basic actions and Warlock spells.

Gazing at the blue sea below, Madam Magician frowned slightly and said, "I clearly pinpointed the island where the Emperor slumbers.
"This is the third failure, a failed wandering...
"Inevitable failure?"
Only Miss Justice, wearing a white dress with golden patterns, could hear The Magician's voice.
Miss Justice was about to relay the question to Ma'am Hermit through mental communication when The Hermit, dressed in a patterned purple robe, foresaw a certain scene.
Enduring the pain, The Hermit used Fairytale Magic to create a brightly colored, somewhat unrealistic ball of yarn in her palm.
Ma'am Hermit threw the yarn forward, watching it roll into the void, leaving only a thread in the air to guide the direction.
In the blink of an eye, the ethereal yarn rolled back from the void to Ma'am Hermit's feet.
...
In Trier, the villa where several members of the Rose School were hiding was enveloped in holy and pure light, forming a slowly shaping golden sun.
There was no shadow or darkness here.
Angoulême de Francois and his team were awakened by Saint Vième's attack on the villa.
They immediately received Saint Plessy's order to evacuate the area.
But before they could turn around, they were nearly blinded by the brilliant light exploding from above, their bodies and minds in shock.
When the light subsided, they recovered and ran frantically towards the street away from the villa.
Angoulême was most grateful that the surrounding residents had already been evacuated.
After running for a while, his vision blurred, and his thoughts became hazy.
He found himself and his team back where they had been standing, affecting Saint Vième's performance.
...
In Trier, high above the city.
Mr. Hanged Man, Mr. Star, and Mr. Moon's figures quickly appeared.
"We can't find Seven of Wands and Two of Cups, or rather, we can't reach the safe house they're hiding in," said Mr. Hanged Man, dressed as a captain and riding a storm. He quickly understood the situation and spoke to Mr. Star, wearing a white shirt, black coat,

and red gloves, and Mr. Moon, dressed in a tailcoat.
Mr. Moon, with his handsome face, crimson eyes, and large bat wings gently flapping behind him, did not respond.
He turned his head, looking towards a place in the plaza district where bright light had erupted, and murmured in confusion, "The Ancestor's summoning?"
Mr. Star, with an elderly voice, said, "It's the influence of the power of Inevitability."
"Yes," said the Madam Judgment in knight's training clothes, emerging from the void. "I sensed the calls of Two of Cups and Seven of Cups, but I can't descend to them."
Mr. Star continued in his elderly voice, "There are only two ways to solve this problem. One is to find the medium allowing the power of Inevitability to seep through and destroy it. The other is to discover flaws in the operation of Inevitability's power and use them to escape the predicament. Of course, this all assumes that the being named Inevitability is only exerting a slight influence through a medium and has not descended into our world."
"Find the medium..." Madam Judgment murmured, then said, "I'll ask Will for help!"
As she spoke, a diamond on her gemstone bracelet lit up with pure light.
At the same time, worms made of intertwined transparent and opaque segments, seemingly ringed, crawled out of Mr. Star's eye sockets, ears, and nostrils.

Chapter 868: Confrontation

High above Trier, an ancient, mottled, gigantic shadow emerged. It resembled a stone-carved wall clock, divided into twelve segments. Each segment was either gray-white or dark green, intermixed yet distinct, each marked with different symbols.

Clang!

The ethereal chime seemed to traverse through ages, making all of Trier appear frozen in time.

In this brief stasis, transparent and opaque worms with twelve rings crawled frantically, burrowing into various places, seeking patterns to deceive and escape the influence of fate.

Lumian and the others were also momentarily immobilized by the ancient-sounding chime.

Not long ago, upon hearing Lumian mention the term "Circle Inhabitant," Franca and Jenna both took out a tarot card from the Traveler's Bag.

The tarot card depicted an angel sounding a trumpet to guide the departed.

Major Arcana card, Judgment!

Next, the two Demonesses softly chanted in Hermes, "Rain judgment!"

They felt Madam Judgment's response, but it was faint, unable to establish a true connection.

The two Demonesses instantly understood that this botanical garden or the surrounding area of the cabin was under more severe restrictions, not just the influence of the Circle Inhabitant's abilities.

While they sought Madam Judgment's descent, Lumian, Anthony, and Lugano watched as their cabin rapidly decayed and collapsed, like a long-buried tree trunk disintegrating into the soil.

Boom!

A blazing-white fireball shot upward, blasting apart the collapsing ceiling, preventing the rotting wood from touching anyone present.

As the cabin decayed and collapsed, Lumian saw two figures appear several dozen meters ahead.

One figure was slender, of medium height, wearing a crisp white shirt and black suit, with a gray bow tie. His features were sharp and pronounced.

Although he appeared elderly, it was clear he had been quite handsome in his youth. His hair was now graying but meticulously groomed, and his face bore brown age spots that seemed ready to fester and ooze.

The other figure was also dressed formally, in his fifties, with thick blond hair flecked with white, eyes as clear as a lake, and a meticulously trimmed beard.
Despite his age, he was still strikingly handsome.
Seeing the latter figure, Lumian, though prepared, still forced a hoarse voice from his throat. "Voisin Sanson!"
This was the leader of the Sinner's Organization, the father of Aurore's original body, a follower of fate who had brought tragedy to Aurore!
"Sanson, leave those two Demonesses to me," the man with the age spots said, his eyes brightening at the sight of Franca and Jenna, addressing Circle Inhabitant Voisin Sanson.
It wasn't just a lust for beauty, but a deep-seated attraction from more profound factors.
Voisin Sanson gazed at Lumian, chuckling lightly as he responded to his collaborator, "No problem, Higdon."
Lumian suppressed his urge to rush forward for revenge, quickly instructing Ludwig, "You handle the blonde one!"
Last time, Lumian had relied on the residual aura of the Blood Emperor to intimidate Voisin Sanson, causing the Circle Inhabitant's effect in the painting world to shatter, allowing him to escape. This time, the residual aura of the Blood Emperor was sealed by the Underworld Daoist, and having suffered once, Voisin Sanson would surely be on guard.
So, Lumian hoped that Ludwig, with his angelic body and rank, could forcibly break the Circle Inhabitant's influence through brute strength and rank suppression.
lf they didn't break free from the Circle Inhabitant, no matter how much effort he, Franca, Jenna, and the others put in, they would be reset to the current moment, achieving nothing.
Ludwig hesitated, as if saying to Lumian, "Me? Fight that powerful old man? I'm just child!"
On the one hand, Ludwig hadn't expected to be part of a battle, and on the other, he felt he shouldn't fight, believing it best to cooperate with the two elders in front of him and let them take him away.
Vaguely, Lumian heard the chime again, his thoughts briefly blurred.
Franca, Jenna, Anthony, and the opposing Voisin Sanson and Higdon all had similar feelings.
Quickly regaining his composure, Lumian swiftly took out Black Tear from the Traveler's Bag and tossed it to Franca.
From Higdon's tone and attitude toward Voisin Sanson, Lumian believed he must be a Saint, a true demigod. Thus, Franca could

only rely on Black Tear to hold off the opponent long enough to break the Circle Inhabitant's effect.
Tossing Black Tear to Franca, Lumian urged Ludwig again, "Go! I'll prepare a grand feast for you later!"
Ludwig hesitated, but his feet remained firmly planted.
At this moment, Voisin Sanson and Higdon, lacking angelic rank, seemed sluggish under some strange influence, not attacking swiftly.
Lumian's voice grew imposing, roaring, "Do you want to be sent back to the Church of Knowledge?"
Ludwig, startled, turned immediately towards Voisin Sanson.
"Don't you enjoy your current life?" Lumian added, based on his understanding of Ludwig.
Ludwig pursed his lips, then stuffed a piece of chocolate into his mouth, sprinting towards Voisin Sanson.
Lumian signaled Franca and Jenna, who had just shaken off the sluggishness.
He meant for Franca to engage Higdon, stalling him, with Jenna assisting Franca but avoiding direct combat.
Franca and Jenna nodded solemnly.
Franca wrapped the Black Tear accessory around her wrist, her figure swiftly disappearing.
Jenna also vanished from sight.
Without hesitation, Lumian retrieved the Devil's Whispers bone ring and slipped it onto his right middle finger.
His body instantly ignited with blue-purple flames, exuding a strong sulfuric scent, and malice surged forth.
He was grateful that he had vented most of his pent-up desires and emotions during this period, feeling much better than when he used the Hisoka relic in Morora.
He then grasped the hilt of the Sword of Courage and drew it from the Traveler's Bag.
Courage filled Lumian's body as he stared at Voisin Sanson, who sought to control Ludwig's insignificant fate, transforming into a long spear of blazing white-blue flame, and hurled it forward.
Revenge! Revenge!
I won't back down!
Before using the Sword of Courage, Lumian had devised a strategy: Franca and Jenna would stall Higdon, while he and Ludwig launched a strong assault on Voisin Sanson, attempting to break the Circle Inhabitant's influence. Anthony would support both sides and act as an external brain.
As for Lugano, he wouldn't participate in the battle, instead finding opportunities to provide healing.

...
Inside the dim "Black Emperor" mausoleum, dark walls surrounded a central black platform.
Atop the platform was a giant chair that appeared to be made of black iron, engraved with complex, twisted patterns. The top of the chair back extended into the shape of a crown.
A massive black shadow sat on the heavy chair, its facial features gradually becoming clear: Blue eyes, a high nose, thin lips, and well-groomed mustache...
The shadow's body also became clearer, seemingly clad in black armor and a luxurious cloak.
Roselle Gustav.
The Intis Emperor who named an era after himself!
He was constantly being reborn and dying, but both processes were distorted and slowed, allowing him to awaken and partially manifest.
Seeing Roselle like this, Bernadette's eyes welled up, and she cried out in both pain and joy, "Dad!"
Roselle's eyes turned blood-red, and his face cracked open to reveal glowing red slits.
But these vanished after another round of death and rebirth.
Regardless of whether he was dying or being reborn, both processes slowed even further.
Roselle looked at his eldest daughter and sighed. "Didn't I tell you never to come back?"
Bernadette, her expression resolute, replied, "Dad, I want to save you!
"I don't dare gamble on whether the one who wakes up is Mr. Fool or The Celestial Worthy of Heaven and Earth for Blessings. At the very least, I want to ensure you can stay conscious and stable without Their help."
Queen Mystic paused, her voice heavy before adding, "Moreover, I can't predict when the apocalypse will come or what the outcome will be. I don't want to wait any longer."
Roselle sighed with a hint of relief.
"Silly child...
"Who helped you bypass my restrictions and return here?"
"It was that individual." Bernadette didn't hide anything from her father.
"Adam? The current True Creator?" Roselle wasn't surprised at all.
Bernadette nodded lightly.
Roselle sneered, then looked at Bernadette with a complicated expression.
"You chose to collaborate with the believers of the Uncertain Mist.

Do you know how dangerous that is?"
Bernadette was silent for a moment, then said, "It's exploitation.
"The forces capable of balancing your corruption are all outside the barrier.
Among them, only the power of the Uncertain Mist can relatively easily penetrate the barrier and transmit some of it inside.
"I've also made some preparations to prevent the vortex from progressing further.
"I deliberately didn't respond to Cattleya's letter, so she would participate in the Tarot Club. When she is above the gray fog, she will quickly become aware, and with the strength of the Tarot Club and its connections, once the problem is identified, they can respond effectively...
"I've also predicted some of Perle's trade partners, discovered the movements of the indulgence faction of the Rose School of Thought, and arranged for my subordinates to leak it to the temperance faction...
"I've also foreseen the outcome of this matter, and the situation hasn't deteriorated.
"That individual also hinted at the same."
Roselle shook his head, his tone slightly grave as he said to Bernadette in a teaching manner, "Perhaps the situation hasn't deteriorated because many people have sacrificed themselves.
"To Adam, this might be necessary.
"But what about you?"

Chapter 869: The Final Lesson

Trier, inside the botanical garden.

Higdon from the Order of All Extinction saw the two Demonesses disappear. He immediately raised his right hand and scratched at the dark brown age spots on his face.

The spots instantly festered, releasing maggots similar to those that crawl through corpses, oozing a greenish-yellow pus.

The disgusting pus evaporated upon contact with the air, dispersing without a trace.

Jenna had just circled to Higdon's side, ready to assist Franca in launching an attack. Suddenly, she felt a wave of lethargy, as if stricken by a sickness called "laziness."

It felt as if her desires were wilting, showing signs of decay, and as if parts of her brain were beginning to malfunction.

Following her instinct, Jenna immediately used her Mirror Substitution, not waiting for the problem to worsen and trigger it passively.

The sound of two simultaneous cracks echoed. Franca, who had been sneaking up on Higdon under the cover of Invisibility to release the Black Tear plague, reacted the same way.

Their figures first materialized and then quickly transformed into mirrors.

During this process, as Franca and Jenna's Mirror Substitutes were still forming, their internal organs sprouted noticeable tumors, autonomously drawing nutrients. Blood vessels around the heart and within the brain rapidly became fragile.

If the Demonesses used pathogens to control diseases, then Higdon's pathway seemed to represent the pathogens themselves, the very essence of disease.

lf Franca and Jenna hadn't actively triggered their Mirror Substitution, it would have been much more difficult to deal with the actual tissue changes in their bodies. They would need to perform a ritual, praying to the Primordial Demoness or a corresponding Angel to transfer the disease to a designated mirror, or one would need to stick to the target while the other left the area, allowing Lugano to perform surgery combined with the Doctor's abilities for treatment.

Meanwhile, the disease had not yet spread. Voisin Sanson, with his blond hair flecked with white, had already found several manipulable fragments within Ludwig's mercury-like river of fate.

As long as he didn't touch the most critical parts of the Angel's fate, he needn't fear backlash or losing control on the spot.

Similarly, his godhood allowed him to observe most of Ludwig's

fate without peering into fragments containing dangerous scenes or knowledge.
Midway through his dash, Ludwig opened his mouth and extended his hand, intending to strip away the Circle Inhabitant's power from his target. At this moment, Voisin Sanson, who had already raised his arm, gently pressed down, magnifying a specific tributary of fate from a distance.
Thud!
Ludwig, the little boy, tripped over a protruding stone and fell flat on his face.
Simultaneously manipulating fate, Voisin Sanson directed his gaze towards Lumian, who had transformed into a blazing white-blue flame spear.
His eyes glowed, instantly emitting two ghostly green beams.
This was a newly contracted ability Voisin Sanson had recently acquired.
The main issue with the Inevitability pathway's Contractee was that the strength of contracted abilities could not surpass the contracted creature's potential. This meant that early-stage contracted abilities were hard to enhance unless the initial contract was with a demigod-level creature, constrained only by one's own spirit and flesh from utilizing the ability to its fullest. This could potentially enhance the contracted ability with each sequence advancement.
Below Sequence 4, without the qualitative factor of godhood, even Sequence 7 or 8 level contracted abilities could participate in Sequence 5 level battles and play significant roles. However, at Sequence 4, facing opponents of the same level, most of these abilities would struggle to be effective, necessitating new suitable contracted creatures.
The ghostly green beams struck the blazing white-blue flame spear directly, giving Lumian no time to dodge.
Yet, the spear contained no trace of Lumian.
As the fiery spear rapidly withered and extinguished, only scattered flames remained within.
As the figures of the two Demonesses reappeared within the cabin's ruins, Lumian, wielding the Sword of Courage, materialized behind Voisin Sanson.
Teleport!
After the Abscessed Hand regained a complete body, Lumian's Spirit World Traversal ability had significantly enhanced!
At this moment, a translucent figure climbed out from Voisin Sanson's back.
The figure resembled Voisin Sanson but was colder and more

indifferent.
This was another ability Voisin Sanson had contracted after becoming a Circle Inhabitant, belonging to the domain of death.
He had always guarded against Lumian's teleportation sneak attacks from behind!
Although this would likely trigger the Circle Inhabitant's effect, he still had to guard against the unexpected. Moreover, it could be used as a trap.
As the cold, indifferent Voisin Sanson specter rushed towards him, Lumian's thoughts began to sink, his body cooling. The blazing white-blue flames on the Sword of Courage gradually dimmed.
...
On the primitive island housing the Black Emperor mausoleum, within the thick white fog.
Perle's ever-changing face cast its gaze on three light points.
The next phase was the most crucial part of Project Vortex.
As Perle's face shifted, two of the three light points suddenly expanded.
One revealed a villa shrouded in white fog, permeated with a blood-red figure yet enveloped in divine light; The other was hazy, as if a figure hung suspended in mid-air, wrapped in yellowing bandages, pierced entirely by countless brownish branches, with thorns and rosebushes entwined. Though constantly intertwining, the roses and thorns continuously wilted and fell.
The suspended figure's belly occasionally swelled and deflated, as if new life was stirring within.
Beside the figure stood a massive tree covered in black tar-like substance. Its limbs, serving as branches, sprouted eerie, terrifying hands, with countless bloodshot black and white eyes rolling over its surface.
Another light point had already expanded, revealing a member of the School of Deliciousness, Topsy, devouring an invisible seal over the ocean.
...
Inside the dim Black Emperor mausoleum.
Hearing her father's question, Bernadette remained silent for two seconds before saying, "I will do my best to prevent it."
Roselle looked at his eldest daughter and smiled with a sigh. "Everyone makes mistakes. In my youth, no, even until I was trapped here, afraid to resurrect, I kept making mistakes, doing many wrong things, some even bad. Only when I resided in this mausoleum, occasionally gaining some peace and clarity, did I finally reflect seriously on my past life, realizing some of my choices caused a lot of unnecessary harm. Of course, I also did

many right things, many good things."
Seeing Bernadette's expression turn gloomy yet stubborn, Roselle affectionately raised his right hand, pressing down. "Don't blame yourself too much. I'm actually very happy and relieved about your choices and actions. Seeing my little princess willing to defy her long-held principle of 'do as you wish, but do no harm,' willing to risk falling into the abyss to save her old father, makes me genuinely happy and relieved. It shows I didn't love you in vain, that my family life wasn't such a failure!"
The increasingly clear figure stood up from the massive black iron chair.
He descended the platform, walking to Bernadette, opening his arms.
Bernadette, momentarily dazed, felt like a child again, instinctively throwing herself into her father's embrace, feeling that familiar yet no longer warm broad chest.
After a brief hug, Roselle stroked Bernadette's chestnut hair, then walked past her, heading towards the mausoleum's entrance, his figure growing larger.
"Dad?" Bernadette turned, calling out instinctively.
Roselle turned his head, smiling. "The vortex ritual has already begun. Due to the unique characteristics of the Uncertain Mist's pathway, it will be hard to stop the subsequent transactions from proceeding. Even if you want to kill that woman, it's unlikely to be accomplished.
"But it doesn't matter, Dad will handle it."
Bernadette suddenly understood her father's intention. She took a step forward, trying to catch up, but found the distance between them unbridgeable.
Meanwhile, she urgently shouted, "Dad, your corruption isn't balanced yet! If the vortex ritual is disrupted, you won't be able to return to your previous state!"
Roselle stopped at the mausoleum's entrance, smiling at his anxious, panicked, and pained daughter.
Raising his arm, he said with spirited enthusiasm, "I was an emperor for many years, stood at the pinnacle of human power. I faced true gods, fought Angels, had followers willing to die for me.
"I brought the light of civilization to that era. Even after a century of death, countless people still recite my name. I slept with many beautiful women and controlled countless destinies. Even after my downfall, no longer an emperor, my daughter is still willing to sacrifice everything to save me, to revive me!
"What regrets could I possibly have in this life?"
Bernadette heard the finality in her father's tone, her eyes

reddening, her voice choking, "Dad!"
She used every ability to close the distance, but it was as insurmountable as the separation of heaven and earth.
Roselle's nearly clear face showed a gentle smile. "Bernadette, do you remember when you were little, and Dad often gave you lessons?"
Tears welled up in Bernadette's eyes, her vision blurring. "I remember. You taught me words, filled my mind with knowledge, told me many, many fairy tales..."
Queen Mystic's face was streaked with glistening tears.
Roselle nodded in satisfaction. "I remember too."
He continued with a slight smile, "Today, Dad will give you one last lesson."
Roselle's expression grew solemn as he looked at Bernadette and declared, "A true gentleman knows what to do and what not to do!"
With that, Roselle turned away, no longer looking at Bernadette.
The Black Emperor mausoleum's doors swung open instantly.
The outside light shone in, illuminating Roselle's giant figure, his black armor, and luxurious cloak.
Bright and radiant.

Chapter 870: Hidden Trap

As soon as Franca's figure materialized within the cabin's ruins, she saw Lumian, behind Voisin Sanson, turning pale. His eyes gradually became hollow, and only the Sword of Courage prevented him from turning into a corpse or triggering his Mirror Substitution. Voisin Sanson, despite having his back to Lumian, raised his left hand, and an indescribable radiance quickly gathered within his fist.

Franca knew she couldn't passively wait for the Mirror Substitution to trigger.

Perhaps Voisin Sanson's impending attack could bypass the connection between the substitute and the original, rendering it ineffective.

At their current distance, neither she, Jenna, nor Anthony could awaken Lumian or stop Voisin Sanson in time.

Even if they could, the threat from Higdon was even more imminent and closing in fast!

At this moment, Ludwig was the closest to Lumian and Voisin Sanson. He had just gotten up but still had twenty to thirty meters to cover before reaching them.

In a flash, Franca took a mirror out of her Traveler's Bag and instantly vanished.

Relying on Black Tear, she appeared in the mirror world, traversing a dark, void-like tunnel into the distance.

Meanwhile, Jenna watched as Franca's mirror fell to the ground, her attention shifting to Higdon, who was now only a few steps away. His face, mostly rotting and oozing pus, had reached her.

She felt that all the Demoness spider threads she had released had withered and decayed, losing their effectiveness.

At this moment, everyone except Ludwig experienced a moment of disorientation.

When Lumian, Franca, Jenna, and Anthony regained clarity, they found themselves back inside the cabin-intact and uncollapsed.

Franca felt a surge of joy seeing this.

Her "retreat in the face of battle" wasn't to escape but to trigger the Circle Inhabitant's effect, resetting the battle and freeing Lumian from Voisin Sanson's secret power and Jenna from Higdon's grip!

Enemy abilities could be used to their advantage!

Finding the trigger point, reverting an adverse situation instantly, meant any dangerous or fatal scenario could be retried. Of course, this was only if they had time to trigger it.

Never thought you could use the enemy's abilities like this... Jenna, momentarily stunned by this realization, saw the cabin decaying

and collapsing again, revealing Voisin Sanson and Higdon approaching from a distance.
Lumian wasn't surprised. He had actively triggered the Circle Inhabitant effect back in Cordu Village, seeking a reset.
He quickly reached into the Traveler's Bag, retrieving the Black Tear forehead accessory and tossing it to Franca.
Franca shouted, "Stall!"
She had a plan for the current predicament: delay until circumstances changed!
Since they couldn't break Voisin Sanson's Circle Inhabitant in a short time, they could use it fully. If things went wrong, they could restart, delaying until the authorities in Trier noticed the anomaly or the Tarot Club's Major Arcana card holders found a solution and approached.
As long as the evil gods hadn't fully invaded this world and the apocalypse hadn't arrived prematurely, delaying would surely bring assistance to cleanse the heretics!
After all, this was the capital of Intis, Trier!
Franca thought this and acted accordingly. She caught the Black Tear forehead accessory and threw her Ice Talisman to Jenna.
This way, three people in the group could try to leave the area in different ways to trigger the Circle Inhabitant effect, without worrying about Voisin Sanson and Higdon each locking onto one of them, thus greatly increasing their margin for error.
When Franca suggested this, Lumian was about to retrieve the Sword of Courage, and Ludwig was already instinctively charging towards Voisin Sanson.
Lumian noticed that Voisin Sanson's expression remained unchanged, despite Franca discovering the weakness of the Circle Inhabitant and planning to delay until the end of the Project Vortex.
He suddenly had a thought. Combining his understanding of the Inevitability pathway, he formed an initial judgment: Voisin Sanson couldn't allow the Circle Inhabitant to loop infinitely. He likely set a predetermined end for it. Each reset would push everyone closer to that conclusion until it became unavoidable.
From the fact that they could retain their memories after the reset, it was clear that the Inevitability power attached to the Circle Inhabitant effect wasn't strong.
This endpoint wasn't far away.
Lumian immediately reminded Franca, "Only one more time!"
In the Inevitability pathway, the number "three" was sacred, with strong mystical symbolism. It represented the past, present, and future, and pointed to the beginning, process, and end.

Additionally, the initial number of abilities gained by a Contractee fluctuates around three. Lumian suspected that after three activations of the Circle Inhabitant effect, the fourth reset would lead them directly to the predetermined end, with no way to reverse it.
In other words, three times was the limit, and the fourth would bring the final result. They had already triggered the Circle Inhabitant effect twice.
Franca didn't understand why Lumian was denying her proposal, why he said they could only use the Circle Inhabitant effect one more time. But she knew Lumian understood the Inevitability pathway better than she did; he was the expert in this area, so she should heed his advice.
Thud!
As Ludwig fell again, Higdon, whose age spots had not yet festered, slowly raised his arms.
He clearly remembered the battle from the last loop and chose a different approach this time.
Higdon's aura suddenly weakened, as if he was on the brink of death but not quite there yet.
The age spots on his face festered, and his body emitted a strong smell of decay.
He was quickly covered in a thick, disgusting, greenish-yellow pus.
Higdon then vanished, seemingly disintegrating into countless pathogens.
Seeing this, Lumian gripped the Sword of Courage, and blazing white-blue flames ignited around him.
The flames quickly spread, circling Franca, Jenna, and the others, protecting them in the center.
Meanwhile, Anthony, who had been observing, solemnly reminded his companions, "Higdon feels very similar to the 'Winter is Coming' revolver."
"Winter is Coming?" Franca and Jenna both tensed.
They remembered very clearly that the Winter is Coming revolver had two very powerful abilities: Certain Death and Sure Hit.
The former meant that if hit, even a Saint-level Beyonder would be critically injured and gradually die, while those below demigod level would die instantly unless they had a substitute. The latter meant that unless they used a substitute before the attack or had a special ability, they would be inevitably hit, and the substitute would fail.
If Higdon was indeed as Anthony described and similar to Winter is Coming, the two Demonesses had to be wary of the Sure Hit ability. After all, their physical strength was certainly not

comparable to a Hunter of the same sequence. If the substitute failed, even if the attack wasn't Certain Death, it would severely injure them!
Protected by the white-blue flames, Franca raised her guard and came up with a new plan.
She glanced at Lumian, who was ready to charge at Voisin Sanson, and quickly told Anthony, "Work with him! Certain Death!"
Franca meant that, with Lumian and Ludwig distracting Voisin Sanson, they should find an opportunity to use the Certain Death ability of Winter is Coming on the Inevitability believer, to see if it could kill him outright, or if the Certain Death effect would be reset by the Circle Inhabitant ability.
As soon as Voisin Sanson died, the Circle Inhabitant effect would naturally be nullified, removing any hidden dangers!
Just as Franca finished speaking, behind her, a greenish-yellow glow quickly condensed within the white-blue flames, forming Higdon covered in thick, disgusting liquid.
The old man was ignited, but he still lashed out at Franca with his arm like a whip.
Sure Hit!
As Franca's spirituality warning triggered, she immediately used her Mirror Substitution.
Smack!
Her body transformed into a mirror, struck by Higdon's thick arm, quickly darkening and shattering, falling to the ground with no trace of light, as if buried in soil for a hundred years.
As Lumian prepared to charge at Voisin Sanson, he suddenly pulled back and swung the Sword of Courage at Higdon.
Courage could be strategic too!
Lumian wasn't afraid of Higdon; he was just concerned that the enemy would flee too quickly, leaving no time to hit his body, so he feigned an attack on Voisin Sanson.
Boom!
As Ludwig fell again, Higdon's arm, unable to escape, was severed by the explosive and sharp sword. The thick, greenish-yellow liquid covering his body was engulfed by the blazing white-blue flames.
Smack!
The severed arm fell to the ground, wriggling and growing rapidly, turning into another Higdon.
Now, there were two Higdons.
The flames covering them quickly dimmed, decayed, and extinguished!
The two Higdons pounced on Franca and Jenna.

Meanwhile, Voisin Sanson, who had planned to magnify a tributary of Franca's fate to make her substitution fail, suddenly felt a ripple of destiny.
He instantly had an epiphany: No more delays, time is running out!
Voisin Sanson frowned.
He didn't want to do what came next; it would be extremely painful.
Let it be an accumulation for the Sufferer stage... Voisin Sanson raised his right hand, pressing it to his temple, gathering an indescribable radiance.
As the source of the Circle Inhabitant effect, he couldn't trigger a reset by leaving the area; that would mean truly leaving. He had to kill himself!
Seeing this, Franca and the others felt a strong sense of foreboding.
At that moment, the radiance in Voisin Sanson's hand strangely dissipated, as if twisted out of its composition.
Similarly, the two Higdons missed their targets, and Lumian's Sword of Courage struck nothing.
The sky darkened, and a majestic voice echoed in everyone's ears: "People of Intis, your emperor has returned!"

Chapter 871: The Critical Part

Deep within the primitive island, amid the pervasive white mist, Perle's twisted face saw the gates of the Black Emperor mausoleum swing open.

A giant figure clad in black armor and a magnificent cloak emerged with majesty, with a torrent of white mist flowing between Perle and the figure.

Roselle Gustav... Perle's face instinctively tensed, causing the mist that formed her body to collapse inward slightly.

Roselle didn't spare a glance at the Vortex Weaver. He floated step by step into the air, reaching the edge of an abstract and ethereal strange world, like a rising mountain.

During this process, the sky dimmed, and the remaining clouds twisted as if something had begun to come alive.

Roselle gazed into the distance, raised his arms, and in a grand voice, he proclaimed, "People of Intis, your emperor has returned!"

Suddenly, the clouds above were pushed together by an invisible force, swirling downwards to form another terrifying vortex.

The center of this vortex was Roselle Gustav.

Meanwhile, across Intis, those who still followed the order Roselle had established heard the voice of the returning emperor. Most were bewildered, questioning their ears after the recent burst of intense light, while a few turned pale, unable to believe their suspicions.

To the eastern reaches of the sky, a beam of light flared up, trembling wildly as if striving to cross the vast distance and reach Roselle's embrace, causing various distortions. Behind this beam, three more beams appeared, as if pushed by an invisible force, forced to advance prematurely.

In different parts of the world, some people found themselves back home despite having just left, others saw their bright cathedrals turn dark and silent, and some were habitually drinking milk but didn't notice they were using their nostrils, suffering no harm.

Long-abandoned compulsory education schools strangely lit up, as if filled with students quietly attending classes.

Using his Worms of Time to search for a flaw in Inevitability's watch, Pallez found an exploitable point, but the Worms of Time he sent out disobeyed His commands.

Madam Magician, who was wandering again with Ma'am Hermit and Miss Justice, found herself away from the target location, instead of the sea, and in front of her appeared Madam Judgment and the little boy Will Auceptin holding her hand.

The light dots within the white mist remained largely unaffected,

only dimming slightly. Perle, the Vortex Weaver, was first startled, then showed a joyous expression.
She hadn't expected Roselle to step forward, forcibly reviving himself before the ceremony's end to reclaim the Black Emperor's divine throne. Such an outcome was beyond her wildest dreams, and she hadn't even considered having Héloise, the Fate's Attendant, weave it, but this was undoubtedly a good thing for her and the great entity she worshiped, the Uncertain Mist.
The rewards this time will be immense! Perle had just formed this thought when the Uncertain Mist she was linked to through the ritual conveyed an emotion, tightening their connection and thickening the swirling mist.
Perle sharply turned her gaze towards the villa in Trier, towards the twisted blood shadow emerging from the sacred glow and white mist.
In a drifting voice, she spoke, "The payment for the indulgence faction of the Rose School of Thought is the Shadow of the Beauty Goddess, a Sealed Artifact derived from the Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristic of the Moon pathway. The one willing to offer a price for it is Madam Hart of the Nightstalkers."
As Perle's Words of Order echoed, another light dot rapidly expanded.
This light dot revealed a secret chamber, where a vague female statue stood in the center, the walls covered with childlike figures with bird-clawed limbs, and the floor piled with expressionless humans.
At that moment, a figure stood before the statue, her belly swollen, face full and beautiful, with emerald eyes sparkling like gems, and brown hair neatly tied up, wearing a simple and loose white robe- a pregnant woman.
The lady who nurtured a deity!
The twisted blood shadow from the villa in Trier, using the white mist, pierced through the corresponding light dot and appeared beside Perle, then moved towards the light dot where Madam Hart was.
It walked slowly, influenced and twisted by Roselle's resurrection.
"Madam, you may begin." Perle couldn't change the situation of the Shadow of the Beauty Goddess and could only ask Madam Hart of the Nightstalkers to provide the price in advance.
Hart nodded gently, turned to face the statue in the chamber, and chanted incantations in a low, indistinct voice.
As the incantation neared its end, the childlike figures on the walls became illusory, transforming into beams of light that entered the statue's belly. The dazed humans on the floor exploded

one by one, returning as flesh and blood to the great mother.
The female statue gradually took on a crimson glow, transforming into a humanoid crimson moon.
Madam Hart then turned and made a cradling motion towards Emperor Roselle in the air.
She called out in ancient Jotun, "Come back, child of the mother!"
Blood-red moonlight seeped from Roselle's body, leaving him and heading towards the light dot where the female deity statue stood.
These were the pollutants that forced Roselle to seek godhood and death but failed to free himself from.
Now, they were all drawn out, no longer affecting Roselle, no longer attempting to corrupt him.
Roselle's century-old problem was thus effortlessly solved, but his current state required the corruption of the Uncertain Mist to balance the corruption of the Great Mother. Removing either would break the balance!
In the blink of an eye, Roselle was filled with white mist, twisting the speed of passing and the distance between two points, gradually eroding the emperor to completely corrupt him.
Inside the Black Emperor mausoleum, Bernadette saw this and, no longer calm like outside the mausoleum, anxiously shouted, "Adam, where is your promise?"
Roselle remained unaffected by his state change, as if it was within his expectations. He continued to spread his arms, awaiting the return of the Black Emperor's Uniqueness and three Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristics.
These were traits unique to the Black Emperor's true deity. Once revived, regardless of who held the Uniqueness and the three Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristics, they would forcibly return, merging with him without the need for extra rituals or potions!
Crimson moonlight rose from various parts of the primitive island, coalescing with the pollutants drawn from Roselle into a miniature crimson moon-like object.
Perle's ethereal voice rang out in time, "Madam Hart requested the Great Mother to reclaim the corruption from Roselle Gustav. This corruption will be exchanged for the Shadow of the Beauty Goddess and given to the indulgence faction of the Rose School of Thought..."
Madam Hart caught the miniature crimson moon trying to return to the mother's embrace and pushed it out of her light dot.
The miniature crimson moon entered the white mist created by Perle, slowly flying towards another light dot.
This wasn't the light dot the Shadow of the Beauty Goddess emerged from but one guarded by a peculiar giant tree with a

vague figure hanging above it.
The Vortex Weaver, Perle, suppressed her excitement and once again scrutinized the scene of Topsy of the School of Deliciousness destroying the seal in the sea.
In the next second, wisps of thin gray fog seeped from the seabed, cooperating with the hydra-like Topsy.
...
Trier, botanical garden.
Hearing the emperor's return across space, Franca's lake-blue eyes widened in astonishment and confusion, with a hint of uncontrollable joy.
At the same time, her spiritual intuition told her that the order here had been distorted, including the Circle Inhabitant effect.
And wherever there was a distortion, it meant they could escape without triggering the Circle Inhabitant effect!
Where is the distortion? Franca had just this thought when she saw Jenna take out a mirror and quickly perform a Magic Mirror Divination.
Jenna had a similar intuition.
Meanwhile, the two Higdons, ignoring the unusual surroundings, madly attacked Lumian, who wielded the Sword of Courage, unable to focus on the two Demonesses.
Likewise, before Voisin Sanson stood only Ludwig, still short-legged and short-statured, unable to reach him to interfere.
The Circle Inhabitant made a quick decision, pressing his temple, letting the gathered strange light pierce through his head.
In excruciating pain unbearable even for an Ascetic, he was instantly near death.
The Circle Inhabitant effect triggered once more.
Lumian and Anthony's thoughts blurred, and they found themselves back in the intact cabin, before taking out the Sword of Courage and Black Tear forehead accessory.
Franca and Jenna couldn't complete their Magic Mirror Divination in time.
Lumian instinctively took out the Black Tear forehead accessory, intending to throw it to Franca, but upon grasping it, he sensed the mirror world, particularly the special one, feeling the summons of 0-01 from Morora.
Is it possible to sense this way? Not before...
The earlier anomaly distorted the order here and the Circle Inhabitant effect, causing this change? Meaning they could escape through the mirror world without triggering the Circle Inhabitant? Lumian instantly judged.
He acted before Voisin Sanson could commit suicide again and

bring the inevitable end, shouting to Franca and the others, "Grab hold of me!"
Time was tight; he couldn't explain and hoped his teammates would trust him.
Despite their doubts, Franca and the others, including Ludwig, grabbed Lumian's body again.
In the next second, Lumian used the Black Tear forehead accessory and the cabin's window to enter the void-dark mirror world, randomly choosing a tunnel to traverse.
As expected, they didn't trigger the Circle Inhabitant effect this time.
As joy surged in Lugano's heart, everything blurred in a topsy-turvy manner, and they found themselves in an almost completely dark world, facing Harrison from Resurrection Island.
Around Harrison were four lit candles and four servings of staple food, including two loaves of bread, Feynapotter noodles and rice, all moldy.
Harrison looked at Lumian with a slight smile. "The Celestial Worthy's Oracle states you carry the key part of this matter. Capturing you will eliminate any surprises."
As Harrison spoke, Voisin Sanson and Higdon appeared in the darkness beside him.
Voisin Sanson also looked at Lumian, smiling. "Didn't you know I escaped from Fourth Epoch Trier through the special mirror world?"

Chapter 872: Courage

Lumian didn't waste time engaging with Harrison, Voisin Sanson, and the others.

This confirmed that the Mirror People were deeply involved in Project Vortex, and this was indeed the special mirror world, though its specific layer was unknown.

Lumian immediately activated the black mark on his right shoulder. He needed to transport Franca and the others away from this area before Voisin Sanson could use his Circle Inhabitant ability.

This time, his destination was Morora, the City of Exiles!

Since they had already entered the special mirror world and the worst-case scenario had occurred, there was no need to hold back. They could attempt to navigate the hidden dangers here and reach Morora.

If they didn't take risks, facing Voisin Sanson and Higdon, two demigods, plus the strange and special abilities of Harrison, Lumian doubted they had any chance of survival. All of them dying was only a matter of time. It was better to take a gamble and see if they could get through the dangers of the special mirror world and reach Morora.

In Morora, Lumian was the proxy of 0-01. He could borrow significant power, enough to counter a Sequence 4 demigod. If necessary, he could even temporarily exert the strength of Sequence 3. With the cooperation of Franca, Jenna, and the others, and the "help" of Morora's archbishop and hundreds of thousands of residents, they might repel or even kill Voisin Sanson and Higdon.

More importantly, 0-01 repelled the approach of demigods above Sequence 5, likely causing terrifying mutations. The first targets would inevitably be those two Saints!

Lumian used his Spirit World Traversal ability obtained from the Abscessed Hand, leveraging his special connection with 0-01. Holding on to Jenna, Anthony, and the others who hadn't let go, he disappeared from the spot, "transporting" to some deep part of the special mirror world.

Suddenly, he felt the world rejecting him, as if an invisible barrier had appeared ahead.

He was forced out of the Spirit World Traversal state, and several figures simultaneously materialized in a gloomy, dark town ruin.

The path to Morora was blocked.

It seemed the higher powers within the Mirror People did this. Their control over the special mirror world was clearly superior to

the Black Tear.
Lumian thought for a moment, seeing that Voisin Sanson and the others hadn't caught up yet. He immediately tossed the Black Tear forehead accessory to Franca, speaking calmly, "You lead them through the mirrors, constantly shifting locations. Wait for a change in the outside world. There has already been a distortion of order; there will surely be similar anomalies soon. When that happens, seize the opportunity to use the mirrors to return to the surface, back to Trier."
"What about you?" Jenna blurted out.
Lumian chuckled. "Of course, I'll stay and play with them.
"If I go with you, they'll definitely chase us relentlessly, giving you no chance to escape the special mirror world. Wouldn't that mean no one could find reinforcements?"
Jenna's eyes reddened, and she was about to say something when Lumian sternly interrupted, "Have you forgotten your brother?"
Jenna's mouth opened slightly, but no words came out.
Lumian nodded and smiled again.
"You need to find Madam Magician and Madam Judgment for me, and provide accurate coordinates.
"Also, you should be able to distract one demigod."
He didn't hold back, smiling at Jenna, Franca, and Anthony.
"If I die, remember to avenge me."
Jenna's vision blurred with tears. She bit her lip, nodded with difficulty, and squeezed out a word from her throat, "Okay..."
She would avenge Lumian just as she avenged her mother!
Lumian turned to Franca, his expression calm. "Everything else is up to you."
Franca's eyes shimmered, her voice hoarse. "Okay."
Lumian put on the Devil's Whispers bone ring again and continued speaking to Franca, Jenna, and the others, "You are not the main target, not even secondary. While shifting locations through the mirrors, if Higdon catches up, leave Ludwig somewhere along the way. Let him hide on his own, which should buy you more time.
"Do you have any objections?" he asked Ludwig.
Ludwig shook his head, feeling this was something he had hoped for.
He made one request.
"Can you give me more food?"
With his body burning with blue-purple sulfur flames, Lumian tossed some chocolate and cookies over, then spoke to Anthony, "If Higdon keeps chasing, you can separate from the group."
Seeing Anthony about to refuse, Lumian smiled.
"Someone has to stay alive to avenge us.

"The one who lives suffers the most. I believe you understand that."
Anthony cast a Placate spell on himself. "Okay."
Lumian didn't say more and urged them, "Go quickly."
Franca threw the Black Tear back to Lumian. "The Ice Talisman is enough if we're just shifting locations through mirrors. The Black Tear can leverage the power of the special mirror world and should help you last longer."
The Demoness of Affliction's voice choked, feeling the potion digesting rapidly.
Lumian didn't refuse and quickly wrapped the Black Tear around his left wrist.
Franca immediately took out the ice-crystal-like amulet from the Traveler's Bag.
Without hesitation, she gritted her teeth. "Hold on to me."
Jenna looked at Lumian with watery eyes and grabbed Franca's arm. Lugano eagerly moved to Franca's back.
With a flash of icy light, they disappeared, leaving a falling mirror.
Lumian turned his gaze to the three approaching figures.
The enemies were closing in.
Looking at Voisin Sanson, Higdon, and Harrison, with the Black Tear on his left wrist and the Devil's Whispers on his right hand, Lumian drew the Sword of Courage from the Traveler's Bag.
The blue-purple sulfur flames on him immediately turned a bright white with a tinge of green. His back slightly arched.
His eyes deepened in color, locking onto the blonde-haired Voisin Sanson, a clear smile on his face.
He uttered from his throat. "Actually, I've been waiting for you for a long time."
...
Madam Magician, unexpectedly reunited with Madam Judgment and Will Auceptin due to the distortion effect, straightforwardly asked the little boy, "Can you lead us to the medium through which the power of Inevitability is seeping?"
Will Auceptin, chubby-faced and dressed in a child's suit, showed a troubled expression.
"Given the current situation, anyone not involved in Project Vortex will be influenced by the power of Inevitability, leading to inevitable failure. If I use that die, I might still be able to help you find the target, but it will drain all my accumulated luck. When I get home, I might see Ouroboros waiting for me.
"Do you have any special items that can save my luck or replace the die? I think you should."
Hearing the archangel of Fate say "should," The Magician, Justice, and Hermit began to examine their possessions-the latter

understanding Will's words through Miss Justice's mental communication.
Suddenly, Ma'am Hermit remembered something and produced an iron cigar case from somewhere.
"This was given to me by Queen Mystic. She said she foresaw that this item would provide critical help in the future."
Madam Magician glanced at it and murmured, "It carries the aura of Mr. Fool."
Hearing this, Miss Justice made many connections.
She sought confirmation, "Did the Celestial Worthy send subordinates to participate in Project Vortex?"
"Yes," Madam Magician vaguely understood what Miss Justice meant.
Receiving confirmation, Miss Justice smiled. "The Celestial Worthy participating in Project Vortex means Mr. Fool is involved too, doesn't it? So..."
She looked at the iron cigar case in Ma'am Hermit's hand, her voice synchronously echoing in the mind of the Major Arcana card holder.
Ma'am Hermit immediately handed the item to Will.
Will smiled broadly. "It will do!"
The boy then addressed Madam Magician and Miss Justice, "I'll lead the way."
Though leading, Will closed His eyes.
Starlight sprinkled down as Madam Magician led everyone present, following Will's intuition to begin wandering.
...
Deep within the primitive island, amid the pervasive white mist.
Vortex Weaver Perle occasionally glanced at the slowly approaching Shadow of the Beauty Goddess and the miniature crimson moon-like corruption, sometimes at the loosening seal in the waters near Port Santa under coordinated efforts, and sometimes upward at the towering figure of Roselle Gustav in mid-air.
The four beams of light on the horizon, one after another, drew closer.
Perle anticipated that Roselle would perfectly resurrect and return as the Black Emperor. In that case, the great Uncertain Mist would reclaim one of His possessions and have a Sequence 0 true deity as a puppet.
According to Perle's original plan, the end of the vortex ritual and the completion of the transaction between the Nightstalkers and the Rose School of Thought would allow the great Uncertain Mist to thoroughly corrupt Roselle Gustav. Only then could the deceased

Black Emperor be driven to resurrect. At that time, with all transactions concluded and no other forces providing assistance, the resurrection of the Black Emperor would face numerous obstructions, necessitating another vortex.
But now, Roselle Gustav had walked out of the Black Emperor's mausoleum himself, choosing to resurrect before the vortex ritual ended!
In midair, the first beam finally landed on Roselle, who was in the strange and abstract world, followed by the other three.
An indescribable light suddenly burst forth.

Chapter 873: The Predestined Battle

In the special mirror world, seeing that only Lumian was ahead, Higdon immediately looked towards Voisin Sanson.

Voisin Sanson took off a ring that looked like it was made of glass and tossed it to the demigod of the Order of All Extinction.

Harrison, standing to the side, spoke in somewhat awkward Intisian, "This world will guide you."

At this moment, Lumian, engulfed in blazing white-blue flames, charged forward with the Sword of Courage in hand.

After catching the glass-like ring, Higdon immediately activated it.

In this almost completely dark town ruin, as if covered by something from above, various mirror-like objects suddenly lit up.

Higdon's figure was then enveloped in a transparent light and thrown into one of the mirrors, chasing after Ludwig and the others.

Lumian had only taken a few steps before he suddenly disappeared from the spot.

Behind Voisin Sanson, a ball of blazing white-blue flame quickly appeared, expanding rapidly and forming into a burning figure wielding a giant flaming sword.

The Circle Inhabitant was not surprised. A semi-transparent figure resembling him but colder and more indifferent emerged from behind him.

This was Voisin Sanson's new contract ability, "Death's Summon!"

The blazing white-blue figure quickly dimmed as the semi-transparent upper body approached, extinguishing the flames one by one.

However, Lumian himself was not within this figure.

At Voisin Sanson's feet, the shadows cast by the flames came to life eerily, transforming into a sticky black liquid that seemed to condense from the darkest desires and emotions of the human heart, surging upwards.

It first wrapped around Voisin Sanson's legs, then quickly spread to his torso.

Desire Incarnation!

Lumian's previous attack from behind was merely a distraction for Voisin Sanson.

The real killing move was the Desire Incarnation from the Devil's Whispers bone ring. This allowed the various chaotic corruptions and seals within him to play a significant role in battle.

So, when he teleported behind Voisin Sanson, he used the flaming figure he had created as a cover, turned into a shadow creature, and slipped into the shadows under the target's feet, activating the

Devil's Whispers bone ring from Hisoka.
As for the other enemy present, the courageous Lumian did not pay him any mind.
Before drawing the Sword of Courage, he had already planned his battle strategy: With Ludwig, Franca and the others should be able to divert Higdon.
Lumian only needed to deal with Voisin Sanson and Harrison. Though Harrison was not a demigod and lacked godhood, his abilities were strange and varied, making it just as difficult to kill him quickly as to severely injure Voisin Sanson.
Thus, the primary target had to be the Circle Inhabitant Voisin Sanson. Lumian would rely on the quicker and more frequently usable Spirit World Traversal to constantly flash around, avoiding being caught by Harrison, who might steal his items or crucial abilities.
During this process, the mystical plague from the Black Tear forehead accessory would naturally spread, covering the area. Lumian believed it would be highly effective against Harrison's Paper Figurine Substitutes. Harrison might use the Paper Figurine Substitutes to avoid the occult diseases, but as long as he stayed on the battlefield, he would continue to be infected. The Paper Figurine Substitutes would eventually be exhausted, and over time, the damage rate would increase dramatically.
Just as the sticky black liquid covered Voisin Sanson, his body suddenly became blurry.
Lumian's mind fogged momentarily, and by the time he cleared up, Voisin Sanson had already put several meters between them, showing no signs of the Desire Incarnation's terrifying corruption affecting him.
This was another application of the Circle Inhabitant's ability.
This time, Voisin Sanson hadn't included the entire town ruin in the Circle Inhabitant effect, only treating his own body. Just like Lumian resetting his physical and spiritual state every morning at six o'clock, Voisin Sanson's trigger was Set to near-death or when suffering a fatal attack.
The Desire Incarnation attack had triggered the Circle Inhabitant effect, allowing Voisin Sanson to recover and use the brief moment of Lumian's distraction to create distance. Otherwise, he would have continued to be engulfed by the sticky black liquid.
Next, a ghostly green light condensed in Voisin Sanson's eyes and shot towards the recovering black liquid.
Lumian didn't have time to teleport and could only swiftly animate his shadow, swapping places with it.
As soon as the beam appeared, it hit the shadow, causing it to

disintegrate instantly with no room for struggle.
Almost simultaneously, Voisin Sanson extended his right hand.
His eyes were dyed with a silver-black hue, reflecting a silently flowing mercury river.
This was the River of Fate, belonging to Lumian.
Voisin Sanson, the Circle Inhabitant, intended to exchange a segment of Lumian's fate.
After dodging the green beam, Lumian fearlessly teleported to Voisin Sanson's side once more.
Heh, trying Fate Exchange?
No problem!
As long as I knock you into a reset, your attempt will fail!
Lumian raised the iron-black straight sword, blazing with white-blue flames, and slashed heavily at Voisin Sanson.
Cull!
At that moment, Harrison finally found an opportunity. He reached out his right hand and lightly grabbed, Stealing this attack.
Blazing white-blue flames appeared on his body, and a giant flaming sword formed in his hand.
Bang!
From over ten meters away, Harrison slashed the flaming giant sword at Lumian, producing a fierce explosion.
Lumian, undaunted, turned to face the roaring flames and swung the Sword of Courage once more.
Another Cull!
Rumble!
The white-blue flames and the terrifying shockwave clashed, the violent windstorm wreaking havoc in the ruins, lifting stones and igniting wood.
Harrison was engulfed by the returning flaming windstorm, his body quickly degenerating into a sinister paper figurine with drawn features.
This paper figurine's surface was marked with red and yellow rust, which quickly burned to ash in the white-blue flames.
As Harrison's figure reappeared at the edge of the storm, Lumian, with his enhanced physique from 0-01 and the Sword of Courage absorbing damage, did not retreat a single step and locked onto Voisin Sanson again.
His eyes turned iron-black, searching for the weak point on Voisin Sanson.
He raised the Sword of Courage once more, conjuring several white-blue Fire Ravens behind him.
At this moment, thanks to Harrison's delay, Voisin Sanson

completed all the prerequisites for the Fate Exchange. Soon, he would just wait for the time to pass and welcome the final outcome. If Lumian hadn't possessed a false Angel rank, Voisin Sanson could have started the exchange directly after choosing the desired segment from the River of Destiny without taking extra time.

Bang!

Lumian slashed the Sword of Courage down on Voisin Sanson's head, and the white-blue Fire Ravens circled, covering the surrounding area.

You can use the Circle Inhabitant ability to restore your state, but I can target you with area attacks and delayed assaults right after you recover!

A few more resets, and you will reach your inevitable end!

Boom!

Voisin Sanson's body blurred again, causing Lumian's thoughts to become hazy.

Using the Circle Inhabitant effect, Voisin Sanson recovered from the damage caused by the Sword of Courage. However, the white-blue Fire Ravens continued to follow their predetermined paths, landing in different spots.

Suddenly, Voisin Sanson's figure vanished from the spot.

As the crows exploded one after another, the Circle Inhabitant's figure reappeared about forty meters away.

You may be able to teleport, but I also have teleportation from my contract!

Lumian's figure quickly appeared beside Voisin Sanson, relentlessly pursuing him.

His eyes turned silver-black, reflecting Voisin Sanson's mercurial River of Fate.

He extended his left hand, pushing the illusory River of Destiny towards the tributary where Voisin Sanson couldn't escape the subsequent attacks, while slashing with the Sword of Courage, creating more white-blue fireballs.

Had he found the right choice, Lumian would have used Compelling Fate to directly disrupt Voisin Sanson's Circle Inhabitant effect.

Rumble!

Lumian's spirituality was drained by the continuous attacks, forcing him to urgently release the accumulated spirituality. Voisin Sanson was hit by the Sword of Courage and, after recovering, couldn't teleport away in time, suffering from the barrage of white-blue fireballs.

The Circle Inhabitant effect triggered for the fourth time.

Voisin Sanson recovered and teleported to another location.
However, the Fate Exchange did not stop, as only Voisin Sanson's body and spirituality were included in the Circle Inhabitant effect, not his fate or actions.
This was similar to Lumian's daily reset at six o'clock, which didn't undo previous actions or invalidate their results.
Lumian relentlessly pursued Voisin Sanson, blinking to his side again.
Voisin Sanson no longer chose to resist head-on. He used his contracted teleportation ability to change his position.
On the other side, Harrison had reverted to a thin, sinister paper figurine, sensing an impending infection.
Lumian continued chasing Voisin Sanson and overtook him with the time gap between teleportation and speed, finding two more opportunities to attack.
However, Voisin Sanson either used special abilities to neutralize the attacks or triggered the Circle Inhabitant effect.
Voisin Sanson's Circle Inhabitant seemed far from reaching its predetermined conclusion.
Even with the Sword of Courage, Lumian felt a certain level of despair-knowing that the Fate Exchange would lead to a very bad outcome, having opportunities to attack the enemy, but unable to stop the exchange and change the impending result.
This might be the meaning of inevitability.
Perhaps a Fate Appropriator needed a Circle Inhabitant to unleash its true horror.
Despair was fleeting; courage once again took hold of Lumian.

Chapter 874: Unsealing

After a while, Voisin Sanson stopped passively waiting for the fate exchange to complete and began actively using various strange abilities, suppressing Lumian's attacks.

On the other side, Harrison increasingly relied on his Paper Figurine Substitutes to avoid the mystical plague spreading through the ruins of the town.

He had little time left to interfere with Lumian and kept trying to remove the densely packed mythical pathogens in the air with various methods he could think of, but to little avail.

Lumian felt the fate exchange nearing completion. Although he wasn't afraid, he decided to take a gamble.

Mimicking the Beyonders of a Warrior, he unleashed a Hurricane of Light, holding the Sword of Courage upside down and stabbing it forcefully into the ground.

With him and the Sword of Courage at the center, blazing white-blue fireballs spread layer upon layer, covering the ruins of the town.

Rumble!

Explosions erupted one after another, destroying the already crumbling ancient buildings and igniting every corner of the ruins.

Harrison used his Paper Figurine Substitute again. As he was always on the edge of the town ruins, his figure reappeared in the dark tunnel they had pursued through earlier.

Voisin Sanson, who was closer to Lumian, was inevitably affected. His attempt to teleport was interrupted by the violent shockwave.

His body caught fire again, but the injuries were not fatal. With the resilience of an Ascetic, he only instinctively twisted his face in pain.

Seizing this opportunity, Lumian teleported in front of Voisin Sanson.

Voisin Sanson's eyes immediately filled with ghostly green light.

Almost simultaneously, Lumian, anticipating Voisin Sanson's habit and method of using the terrifying beam, half-turned the Sword of Courage, holding it horizontally in front of his chest.

The ghostly green beam, upon completion, shot towards Lumian at unavoidable speed, striking the Sword of Courage. The blazing white-blue flames on its iron-black blade were instantly extinguished, and its metallic luster dimmed significantly.

Successfully blocking Voisin Sanson's beam, Lumian released his left hand, aiming to deliver a fatal blow.

He sensed that Voisin Sanson's current Circle Inhabitant cycle was nearing its end. Perhaps two or three more triggers would lead to

the inevitable conclusion, possibly even death.
At this moment, Lumian's hair stood on end, his mind nearly blank.
The negative effects of the Black Tear forehead accessory manifested.
If not for the Sword of Courage sharing the burden, he would have been utterly overwhelmed by Pleasure, rather than just briefly dazed.
Taking advantage of this moment of distraction, Voisin Sanson teleported away from the emptied ruins but did not extend the distance beyond the Fate Exchange limit.
Lumian quickly regained his senses and prepared to pursue Voisin Sanson.
Suddenly, his thoughts slowed, becoming sluggish as if he had been rapidly frozen.
His body became rigid, and even moving a finger was extremely difficult.
The fate exchange had completed.
Clang! The Sword of Courage fell to the ground, as Lumian no longer had the strength to hold it.
Lumian slowly collapsed to the ground, his eyes vacant, his expression blank, leaning against a pile of rubble.
No longer controlled by Courage, he instinctively tried to activate the Blood Emperor's residual mark on his right palm, hoping the rampant frenzy might help him break free from his current state, but he couldn't manage it.
His ability to think coherently was rapidly slipping away.
This was the outcome Voisin Sanson had wanted from the Fate Exchange.
Voisin Sanson smiled, teleporting back to Lumian, and whispered, "If not for your false Angel rank, the fate exchange would have been completed long ago.
"You probably don't know that the maximum limit for the Circle Inhabitant's cycles is nine. You're still several cycles short of dealing real damage to me.
"You're not truly a demigod. There's a fundamental difference between you and someone with godhood."
As Voisin Sanson spoke, he pulled out an incomplete ritual sheepskin, just large enough to cover a head, intending to turn Lumian into a sheep and completely control him.
In the next second, Lumian felt the stiffness in his body and the sluggishness of his thoughts easing, their effects seemingly distorted.
Opportunity! Lumian immediately tried to activate the black mark

on his right shoulder, hoping to teleport out of the special mirror world.
Voisin Sanson's face changed, then he activated a contract mark, shouting in a deep voice, "Lumian Lee!"
As Lumian's figure was still fading away, his mind buzzed, his head spinning, making it difficult to maintain the teleportation effect.
Voisin Sanson then placed the sheepskin over Lumian's head, chanting in Hermes, "Sheep!"
A flash of dark light transformed Lumian into a grayish-white sheep.
Most of his abilities were sealed, and the earlier state of sluggish thoughts and stiff body returned, preventing him from using the Black Tear forehead accessory or the Devil's Whispers bone ring.
Seeing this, Voisin Sanson felt the weakness and spirituality exhaustion in his own body but believed he could endure the mystical plague for a while longer, waiting for the Circle Inhabitant effect to passively activate.
A sinister paper figurine with drawn features entered the still-burning ruins from the tunnel, its surface accumulating rust at a visible rate.
It looked at Lumian and spoke in Harrison's voice, "Your companions don't seem to have escaped either."
As he spoke, the paper figurine made a gesture, and the edges of the dark world illuminated by the flames began to turn transparent, revealing the states of Franca and the others-not through Harrison's magic, but through the Mirror People watching in the shadows.
In the mirror-like scene, Franca led the others, except Ludwia, trying to traverse out of the special mirror world.
Above them, a figure in a black dress and gold crown appeared.
Surrounded by white mist, a light seemed to emanate from in front of her.
She glanced down, causing Franca and the others to fall back into the area they had just left, unable to escape the special mirror world.
Higdon, having split into two and covered in green-yellow slime, blocked Franca and the others' escape route in the scene.
After using it three more times, Franca's Ice Talisman only had one Mirror Traversal left.
She did not attempt to flee again. She pulled out a set of silver-white full-body armor from the Traveler's Bag and placed it in front of herself. Anthony also drew the Winter is Coming revolver.
In another scene, another Higdon was searching for Ludwig.

Seeing this, the increasingly ragged paper figurine of Harrison spoke to Lumian with a laugh, "Your companions will likely all die before you. Their Mirror Substitutes aren't as numerous as my paper figurines. You still have time to mourn them.
"Actually, you've done quite well. If it weren't for me and Higdon, your team might have been able to escape or even win against Voisin Sanson on their own."
With double control over him, Lumian had almost no ability to think deeply, leaving only his emotions to resonate.
His heart was ablaze with anger, indignation, and hatred, filling the sheep's eyes with bloodshot rage.
Voisin Sanson turned to Harrison's paper figurine and asked, "Can I kill him now to bring back Lord Termiboros?"
Harrison's paper figurine shook its head slowly, "The Celestial Worthy's revelation is to imprison."
Voisin Sanson thought for a moment and said, "Indeed, killing this trash might trigger unforeseen changes due to the high-level powers within him, potentially affecting the entire Project Vortex.
"Can I attempt to unseal his chest and bring back Lord Termiboros?"
Harrison's paper figurine paused for two seconds and said, "Yes."
This did not violate the Celestial Worthy's revelation.
Voisin Sanson smiled and said, "I'll need you to use that Celestial Worthy's boon for the final part. Otherwise, I'd have to bring Lumian Lee to the brink of death to unseal him, which is too risky."
The method to unseal Lumian Lee's The Fool seal wasn't devised by Voisin Sanson himself but given through a ritual by the great Circle of Inevitability.
"Okay." Harrison agreed.
Voisin Sanson immediately took out a black metal box and opened it.
Inside were thumb-sized mercury beads, their surfaces tinged with black and inscribed with complex, fear-inducing patterns and symbols.
Voisin Sanson's voice became low and his words eerily ethereal.
The black-tinged mercury beads floated up, spinning rapidly in mid-air, forming a continuous river.
With barely any coherent thoughts, Lumian heard Voisin Sanson and Harrison's conversation and saw the scene unfold but felt no despair or regret.
At this point, despair and regret were meaningless.
Lumian was only filled with anger, indignation, and hatred. The sheep's eyes bulged with fury.

Son of a sow!
Within ten to twenty seconds, Voisin Sanson completed his chant, sending the silver-black river towards Lumian's chest.
In the tunnel, Harrison had lit four candles and placed four pieces of bread in front of each, reciting incantations while taking special footsteps and gestures.
Lumian quickly fell into a dark state, his thoughts gradually clearing.
But before he could form any other thoughts, his chest grew hot, the familiar heat rapidly dissipating, turning cold.
In an instant, silver-black light beams burst from his body, weaving together in front of him to form a figure.

Chapter 875: Response

Madam Magician and the other Major Arcana card holders were again affected by the distortion of order, abruptly emerging from their starry roaming state and floating in midair.

What met their eyes was an unusually bloody altar and countless mutilated corpses.

On the altar, there was also an oil painting depicting a strange cosmos.

Ma'am Hermit, whose hearing was sealed, had a twisted expression and whispered with difficulty, "It's here, it's that painting..."

She felt the terrifying voice influencing her growing louder, originating from that oil painting!

"It really works..." The Magician cast her gaze towards the boy, Will Auceptin, who was holding the iron cigar case. It was unclear whether the praise was for the item imbued with Mr. Fool's aura or the luck she had always envied.

The boy, Will, shrugged and said, "I didn't expect it to be this effective either."

As he spoke, Ma'am Hermit forced an ancient spear stained with mottled blood into existence, sending it with destructive intent towards the painting.

But the Spear of Longinus, born of Fairytale Magic, disintegrated into points of light before it could reach the altar.

In Madam Magician's eyes, brilliant starlight shone.

Around the altar, faint glows outlined a pair of dreamlike doors, attempting to transfer the painting along with the altar outside the barrier, into the deep, dark cosmos.

However, the starlight doors remained motionless, unable to open.

"Those who are not participants in the vortex ritual cannot affect the painting," Miss Justice said, eying the iron cigar case in Will's hand, eager to take it and use it as a medium to showcase her physical strength and see if she could damage the painting.

Madam Judgment took the lead, receiving the iron cigar case from Will and holding it in her hand, making it part of her fist.

Immediately, the Major Arcana card holder shouted in ancient Hermes, "Execution!"

Accompanied by this command, Judgment swung her right fist, the iron cigar case gripped in her hand.

Bang!

The altar dented slightly, but the painting showed no obvious signs of damage.

"There's some effect, but not much," Madam Magician accurately

assessed.
She took the iron cigar case and tried various abilities herself, but could only cause minor damage to the painting, unable to shake its core effect, as they were not participants in the vortex ritual and could only influence it through the medium-the iron cigar case-which lacked destructive power.
Watching the painting still affecting her and many high-level individuals, Ma'am Hermit could not help but feel anxious.
...
Deep in the primitive island, in the dense white mist before the Black Emperor mausoleum.
As the four beams of light merged into Roselle's body in midair, Perle's face was suddenly stretched wide, presenting a comical yet terrifying appearance. The blood-red figure and the miniature crimson moon in the mist retreated strangely, as if going in the wrong direction.
From the light point where the Shadow of the Beauty Goddess emerged, the white mist, which had been nearly purified by the holy pillar, filled again. Saint Vièvе in midair and the Purifiers outside the villa, including Angoulême, felt an impending collapse of the current order.
The lightless domain instantly twisted, with some darkness seeping in, forming a shadowed side.
Discovering the presence of the Shadow of the Beauty Goddess, Mr. Moon was about to turn into crimson moonlight and illuminate the white mist but found himself rushing into the sky. The Worms of Time split by Pallez, just deciding to return, assess the situation, and unite in deception, got lost in life's path.
Mr. Hanged Man, riding the gale, suddenly plummeted, nearly losing his flying ability and falling to the ground.
As distortion phenomena appeared to varying degrees worldwide, at the core of the vortex ritual, Perle struggled to raise her head and look up.
At the edge of the abstract, fantastical world, Roselle's figure, clad in black armor and a luxurious cape, grew larger and clearer, with a crown set with dark gems forming swiftly atop his head.
The surrounding white mist mostly invaded His body, distorting His face, with His eyes a deep blue almost black, a slow-expanding mist.
The Black Emperor had revived in the astral world.
Roselle lowered His head slightly, gazing down, focusing on the white mist before His mausoleum, the torrent connecting Him and the mist, and the face of Perle in the depths of the mist, exuding majesty and depth.

The next moment, the Black Emperor raised His right hand, forming a fist, and gently twisted His wrist.
Distortion!
He forcefully completed a distortion using His authority, the Black Emperor pathway, the special connection with the Uncertain Mist, and the corruption deeply eroding His body and soul, relying on the invisible barrier blocking the Outer Deities.
Perle, deep in the white mist, briefly lost focus, then discovered in shock that the great Uncertain Mist was no longer closely connected with her through the vortex ritual but had shifted to the Black Emperor.
Her object of faith, her ritual foundation, had all been Distorted to Emperor Roselle!
After her initial confusion, Perle quickly felt a surge of fear and despair.
Not only her, but all the Uncertain Mist believers across the continents also saw a thin white mist before their eyes, with a majestic, indistinct figure standing within.
That figure, wearing a crown and black armor, quietly looked down at them.
The Black Emperor's first act upon revival was to temporarily "take over" all faith directed at the Uncertain Mist!
Of course, this also exposed Him more directly to the Outer Deity outside the barrier.
Another wisp of white mist separated from the surface of a planet, reaching the site of an intense divine battle, using the special environment and its symbolism to penetrate the barrier again, falling upon Emperor Roselle at the edge of the astral world, like a fishing line finally controlling its target.
Roselle's expression became increasingly distorted.
He continued to gaze at Perle and the Uncertain Mist believers worldwide, speaking in a majestic voice, "The Broker can unite the Outer Deities and has acted, posing a great threat, a crime beyond pardon!"
As He spoke, the Black Emperor's outstretched right hand opened, as if to grasp something.
After declaring the crime, His right hand clenched abruptly.
Bang! Bang! Bang! On the Northern and Southern Continents, the Uncertain Mist believers exploded into blood mist.
This was not the ability of the Judgment domain but the control granted by the boon system, the control of an evil god over His followers!
Temporarily distorting the Uncertain Mist faith, Black Emperor Roselle used this to purge the evil god's followers, making them

feel the wrath of a god, aiming to eliminate them all.
A single Broker might not be dangerous, but their ability to weave all dangers together made them the greatest threat!
"No!" Despite her desperate resistance, Perle exploded uncontrollably within the white mist.
Her face split into different parts like the nose, eyes, mouth, and ears, scattered into the white mist, staining it with a noticeable blood color.
Yet the vortex ritual had not ceased. The Shadow of the Beauty Goddess and the miniature crimson moon continued to approach their target light point, even faster than before.
Silently, the exploded Uncertain Mist believers, in blood mist form, crossed the void, merging into the vortex mist that Perle had become. This accelerated the advance of the Shadow of the Beauty Goddess and the miniature crimson moon, sustaining the ongoing transaction as if other forces were maintaining the ritual.
A characteristic of the Vortex was that all participants contributed power to maintain the ritual until their part of the transaction was complete.
Thus, once the Vortex was formed, destroying it would become increasingly difficult!
Roselle glanced at the white mist connecting Him and the outside barrier, His expression of pain growing more apparent.
He shouted lowly, "Adam! Where are you?
"The Uncertain Mist has made a heavy bet. If you don't reveal your cards, we're all doomed!"
Seeing no change around, Roselle paused and continued to roar angrily, "Adam!
Are you really waiting for a chance to devour the Eternal Blazing Sun and others?"
Just after Roselle's low roar, a distant yet gentle voice echoed in His mind, "I"m here."
...
In the special mirror world,
Voisin Sanson watched expectantly and reverently as silver-black light beams shot from the gray-white sheep that Lumian had become, waiting for Lord Termiboros to be completely freed.
The beams wove together in front of him, quickly forming a figure.
The figure was slightly hunched, wearing a black classical robe and a pointed hat of the same color, with a thin face, slightly curly black hair, a broad forehead, and pitch-black eyes.
Just as Lumian was about to activate the Blood Emperor's residual aura to try and escape the sheep state, he froze upon seeing this figure.

Wh- Voisin Sanson and Harrison's bodies trembled, also becoming stunned.
The figure slowly straightened, not even glancing at Voisin Sanson and Harrison, but turned to look at Lumian.
Without any warning, the sheep's wool covering Lumian's body fell off, shrinking back to its original head-covering size.
Lumian remained in shock and bewilderment.
The figure took out a monocle made of crystal and leisurely placed it over his right eye, revealing a slight smile at Lumian, "You can call me Amon, or..."
The figure's voice grew majestic and layered, the smile on his face more evident.
"Termiboros."

Chapter 876: The Patient

Lumian knew that the figure before him was Amon. Although Amon's appearance differed somewhat from Monette and the other Amons, the monocle over his right eye and his overall demeanor and aura unmistakably confirmed his identity.

But why was Amon here? And why did he call himself Termiboros?

Lumian clearly saw those silver and black beams of light emerging from within himself, from the shattered seal of Mr. Fool. *How did they transform into Amon?*

This was why Lumian had frozen in place earlier.

Could it be that during their previous encounters, Amon had secretly bypassed Mr. Fool's seal, hidden inside him, and replaced Termiboros?

If so, what had Mr. Fool's seal actually been for?

Despite his shock and confusion, Lumian suppressed these emotions because he had more urgent matters to attend to.

He stood up, ready to pick up the Sword of Courage and use the Mirror Traversal ability of the Black Tear to reach Franca, Jenna, and the others, to help them fight Higdon.

Meanwhile, Voisin Sanson and Harrison stood frozen like statues.

Amon, who claimed to be Termiboros, raised His hand to stop Lumian.

He glanced at the transparent boundary showing the battle between Franca, the others, and Higdon, and smiled, saying, "I've fixed their fate for the next ten minutes so they won't die. You still have some time. As for what happens after ten minutes, that's up to your choices."

Lumian refocused on Amon, removing the Black Tear forehead accessory and tucking it into the separate space within his Traveler's Bag to prevent any further negative effects. In a low voice, he asked, "What choices?"

Without waiting for Amon's response, he couldn't help but ask another question, "When did you become Termiboros?"

As he spoke, Lumian temporarily put away the Devil's Whispers bone ring.

Amon's lips curled slightly. "A long, long time ago. By the time you first learned that name, Termiboros was already me."

At this, the former King of Angels' smile took on a hint of mockery.

"In that dream in Cordu Village, the Warlock symbolized the power of inevitability. The Warlock's death and burial in the tomb symbolized the loss of the true owner of that power-the real Termiboros. The owl guarding the tomb and the Warlock's body symbolized an outsider seeking this power. The other you,

accompanying the owl, symbolized the inherent depravity within everyone.
"Pallez couldn't even decipher this, yet he calls himself a Cryptologist? Just because I changed my symbolic form, He couldn't recognize me?
"Has he already begun aging prematurely at such a young age?"
Lumian didn't know who Pallez was, but he understood the implications of Amon's explanation.
The first time he had heard about depravity was from a Secrets Suppliant. That knowledge came with the potion. The second time was in the honorific name of the True Creator worshiped by the Aurora Order.
And Amon had a very close relationship with that individual.
This meant the True Creator's influence on the Cordu incident was much deeper than Lumian had imagined. It wasn't just a matter of sending a few lizard-like elves to nudge events along!
Rage that even an Ascetic couldn't suppress burned within Lumian. He squeezed out a hoarse voice from his throat, "Was the Cordu disaster the plan formulated by you two?"
Amon pinched His right eye's monocle, not directly answering Lumian's question.
He pulled a piece of paper from the void and read it in the tone of a report, "Patient: Lumian Lee, male, claims to be born on September 26, 1340, a native of Cordu in Riston Province, Intis Republic.
"Diagnosis: Strong self-destructive tendencies, loss of ability to respond to others' emotions.
"Cause Analysis: Experiences as a street urchin made the patient distrustful of his surroundings, developing habits of self-neglect to survive, abandoning certain societal morals. Aurore Lee's care, sympathy, love, supervision, and interdependent life helped the patient initially heal from that phase, reestablishing social connections and gradually becoming a normal person.
"The disaster at Cordu Village and Aurore's death shattered the patient's rebuilt life, bringing more severe pain and despair, making him afraid to desire or respond to others' emotions, fearing loss again, thus fostering strong self-destructive tendencies.
"First Phase Treatment Plan:
"Step 1: Emphasize the possibility of Aurore Lee's resurrection to give the patient motivation to live.
"Step 2: Arrange for the patient to stay at the Auberge du Coq Doré in the Trier market district, where many people at the bottom of society can effectively evoke the patient's empathy.
"Step 3: Force the patient to form connections with Celia Bello and

others through events, preparing to rebuild social connections.
"Step 4: Use the undercover mission in the Iron and Blood Cross Order to make the patient meet Franca Roland. Franca Roland's background is similar to Aurore's, and her cheerful personality can effectively lower the psychological walls the patient has built, making her the most important candidate for re-establishing social connections.
"Step 5: Coordinate with the Tarot Club's Justice and Susie for treatment, reasonably allowing certain events to happen to aid in improving psychological conditions:
"Early Stage: Use the patient's sympathy for the unemployed Charlie and the street girls Ethans allow his help to yield positive results, giving him positive feedback.
"Mid Stage: Ensure the patient encounters Celia Bello after setbacks, receiving companionship and comfort, and using the self-indulgent yet unintentional behavior he chooses to relieve accumulated emotions.
"Late Stage: Bring inevitable events forward at the most appropriate time, with some events potentially occurring before mid-stage treatment:
"These include:
"1. Susanna Mattise targeting Charlie again, having the Bliss Society abduct him to Underground Trier. This would allow the patient to vaguely sense the Sufferer's presence, feel anger, and through these events, strengthen his connections with Franca, Celia, and Charlie, initially rebuilding social ties;
"2. The madman Flameng, whose situation most resembles the patient's, hangs himself after losing all hope and motivation for life despite the patient's help. This strongly resonates with the patient, giving him a huge shock, triggering his rebellious spirit and stubbornness;
"3. Scavenger Ruhr, unfortunately getting affected by the indiscriminate influence of cultists, contracts a severe illness. The patient's efforts to help end in failure, with Ruhr's wife, Michel, losing hope and choosing to indulge once by having a hearty meal and singing loudly before hanging herself at dawn. This similar fate and predestined outcome thoroughly ignite the patient's emotions, making him want to fight against the unfairness of fate, wanting to challenge everything.
"4. The explosion at the chemical plant where Celia Bello's mother worked, acting as the final catalyst.
"First Phase Treatment Result: The patient's self-destructive tendencies significantly reduced, re-established social connections, regained some motivation to live, and can now

handle more events."
As Amon read the "report" in an even tone, Lumian felt his heart sink, growing colder with each word.
It was like being doused with cold water as a street urchin, the chill spreading from his head to his toes, extinguishing all his hope and pride like a candle flame.
His indignation, his rebellion against fate-all of them seemed like a joke, shattered into pieces and ground into the dirt by those in power.
At this moment, Lumian felt completely numb.
Half of him burned with uncontrollable anger and the self-destructive urge to drag the report writer to death with him. The other half once again felt the despair and pain from when Aurore had pushed him away to face death alone.
Amon finally finished reading the first phase treatment report and looked at Lumian with a smile, seemingly waiting for a response.
Lumian's body hunched slightly, and his voice erupted from the depths of his soul, filled with agony, "Why? Why me?"
Amon smiled and said, "The Fool's aura and Aurore's foolish choice made you a good test subject, capable of bearing many things and verifying the initial experimental results.
"That's one reason. The other is if you truly self-destruct, won't my role as Termiboros be exposed? How can I deceive those outside and make Them place heavy bets?
"Only by slowly absorbing and digesting Termiboros' Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristics within The Fool's seal and changing pathways will it be most hidden and least likely to be discovered."
Lumian's mind was in chaos, his emotions exploding, even the Conspirer's abilities were hard to use. He could only ask instinctively, "In that large ceremony with the padre, did not only Termiboros descend but also you? Did you intentionally seal yourself with the injured Termiboros into my body?"
Amon nodded lightly and smiled. "Thanks to your gifts, it helped me open the return path and gave me such a present."
Lumian fell silent, involuntarily breathing heavily as if the air here was too thin, and he had to force himself to breathe deeply. "Previously, the Sufferer hidden around me, who was it?"
Amon shook His head. "Haven't you guessed it yet? You should have heard His name, the Angel of Fate, Ouroboros."
The Angel of Fate, Ouroboros... Lumian was stunned, but it seemed to make sense.
This was the King of Angels who had once followed the Ancient Sun God and was currently serving the True Creator as mentioned by Mr. K during his preaching.

Lumian instinctively gritted his teeth, his voice squeezing out through the gaps, "Did you have a chance to save Aurore back then?"
Amon smiled. "Do you want to hear the answer?"
He glanced at the paper in His hand, seemingly preparing to read new content that might contain all the answers.

Chapter 877: Promised Matters

Chapter 877 Promised Matters

Amon began reading again in a flat tone, "When the anomaly at Cordu Village was discovered, the corruption and personality distortion in Aurore Lee had already become quite severe. If the most skilled Psychologist provided treatment and any true god offered a seal, it might have been possible to save her. But why save her?

"If the situation at Cordu Village had continued to develop, it would indeed have caused a significant catastrophe. However, if intervened, it could bring substantial benefits and play an important role at a critical moment in the future.

"The lizard-shaped elves entered Cordu Village, quietly maintaining the balance. They wanted the outcome to follow the heretics' original plan but not actually succeed. At the same time, they ensured that Aurore Lee retained a slight chance of resurrection.

"In the end, their goal was achieved. Before the Sinners' organization sent someone, Guillaume Bénet conducted the grand sacrifice himself, opening a temporary passage above the barrier, allowing Termiboros to descend.

"Amon had already been waiting nearby, deceiving the ritual, utilizing the barrier, and secretly following Termiboros back into this world.

"Aurore Lee pushing Lumian Lee away in the end brought a bit of an unexpected twist, but it did not change the overall outcome. The Fool's aura on Lumian Lee, stimulated by the surrounding environment and his intense emotional fluctuations, successfully attracted The Fool's attention..."

Hearing this, Lumian's hands unconsciously clenched into fists, his heart burning with rage, overpowering the numbness and despair.

Amon, as if not noticing his emotional change, continued to read, "As a result, Termiboros was severely wounded, and together with the soul fragments of Aurore Lee and the villagers of Cordu, was sealed into Lumian Lee's body. During this process, Amon voluntarily joined them, stealing Termiboros' fate and identity before He could recover, killing Him and reducing Him to a Sequence 1 Beyonder characteristic of the Inevitability pathway.

"Before Lumian Lee became an Ascetic, Amon had already absorbed the Beyonder characteristic, completing the pathway switch, fully replacing Termiboros, only lacking the final ritual.

"This is very important. Whether it's the vortex ritual now or another plan, it doesn't change. Lumian Lee will understand why

soon."
At this point, Amon looked up at the dark sky covered with a thick glass-like layer, smiled, and said, "Next, I will only read the key parts, otherwise, I'm afraid Roselle won't last that long."
Lumian didn't respond to Him, using all his strength to suppress his emotions.
He wanted to uncover the truth behind many previous events!
Amon lowered His head again, looking at the paper in His hand. "After the first phase of psychological treatment ended, the hidden dangers of the Tree of Shadow were prematurely triggered, forcing Lumian Lee to face Susanna Mattise's sacrifice.
"The Amon sealed within him indeed couldn't bear the weight and complexity of the Tree of Shadow's fate torrent, nor could He rapidly evolve the fate fragments of encountering the Montsouris ghost into an attack by the Montsouris ghost. However, the Angel of Fate, Ouroboros, had always been watching from nearby. This was His specialty, and in this regard, He was far superior to the Sufferer of the Inevitability pathway.
"With Ouroboros's covert assistance, Lumian Lee successfully swapped the fate of being attacked by the Montsouris ghost with the fate of the Tree of Shadow having its roots burned by the Fourth Epoch Trier's invisible flames. This would play a crucial role in Lumian Lee and Susanna Mattise's upcoming battle.
"Between the two battles, Amon didn't miss the opportunity, deliberately describing Lumian as the unfortunate one to strike at him. This was a deception; if it were the real Termiboros, He would have said similar words in such a situation.
"At the end of the Tree of Shadow incident, the lizard-like elf deliberately let Lumian Lee see it, giving him a strong desire and motivation to continue exploring the truth behind the Cordu disaster."
Hearing this, Lumian was stunned again.
My desire, my anger, is that what that individual wanted too?
Amon seemed to skip parts and started reading the next key point,
"The madman Flameng, driven insane by encountering the Montsouris ghost, coincidentally stayed at the Auberge du Coq Doré. His experiences and ending resonated with Lumian Lee. The Earth Blood stone he left behind gave Lumian Lee the chance to obtain the residual aura of the Blood Emperor.
"At this time, due to the convergence of Amon's main body, more and more Amons noticed Lumian Lee's existence and obtained corresponding information.
"To bring out the hidden value of the Earth Blood stone, one of the Amons chose to steal it. Coincidentally, a lady from the Church of

Evernight asked Lumian Lee for help to obtain water from the Samaritan Women's Spring leading them into the underground catacombs.
"With the enthusiastic help of the Amons, Lumian Lee ultimately used the Earth Blood stone to gain the residual aura of the Blood Emperor. This was the first step in his mystical similarity to 0-01 which could provide him help in critical moments.
...
"The Hostel plan was initiated as expected. Some participants were killed, some achieved their goals, and those outside who could not observe Fourth Epoch Trier received guidance, while Lumian Lee and others obtained a fragment of the special mirror world for the first time.
...
"After leaving Trier, Lumian Lee inevitably converged to Port Santa, where the seal was reinforced early. Though it left hidden dangers, it could at least last longer...
"On the subsequent journey, Lumian Lee encountered Father Montserrat and obtained Omebella's burned umbilical cord. He also got involved in matters related to Naboredisley, laying the foundation for meeting Farbauti's avatar in the tomb at the end of the Dream Festival...
"During the Dream Festival, Lumian Lee successfully obtained the seal of the Underworld Daoist, truly gaining mystical similarity to 0-01...
"During the journey, Lumian Lee also met several people with experiences similar to his but with different choices and outcomes, which touched him, firming his ideas, and further improving his psychological state. The second phase of psychological treatment was successfully completed.
...
"After asking Mr. K for help to solve Perle's painting person, Lumian Lee went to the first cathedral built by the Aurora Order for the True Creator. There, he coincidentally saw the lizard-like elves crawling in and out of the god.
"This dealt him a huge blow, worsening his psychological state, but also made his desire and determination for revenge stronger and firmer.
...
"After returning to Trier from Morora, Lumian Lee began preparing for his advancement to Iron-blooded Knight. What he didn't realize was that his psychological state and emotional condition had not met the requirements to become a demigod. Even with the sealed angel as a teammate, there was a significant probability that he

would lose control after consuming the Iron-blooded Knight potion.
"Fortunately, the presence of the Black Tear and Celia Bello becoming a Demoness of Pleasure prematurely triggered the emotional issues within Lumian's team. After much entanglement and pain, Lumian chose to face his thoughts and tried to respond to others' attention to him. Although his response was twisted, he at least took the first step, no longer passively accepting but placing himself in a position of importance. This mindset change was crucial for his subsequent advancement ritual.
"As a result, Lumian Lee's emotions and desires were vented, and his importance was no longer suppressed by his fear of loss. His connections with Franca Roland and Celia Bello became stronger and closer, providing him with two strong anchors during his advancement to demigod, helping him stabilize his consciousness.
"The third and final phase of psychological treatment ended, and Lumian Lee could now withstand new blows.
...
"During the vortex ritual, Lumian's team fell into a desperate situation. All his teammates, except him, were about to be killed or taken away by Higdon of the Order of All Extinction in a few minutes.
"Lumian Lee wanted to ask Amon for help, but Amon chose to refuse because He wasn't Lumian Lee's godfather and had no obligation, even though Lumian Lee had indeed become more like Amon, using loopholes more skillfully after repeatedly receiving boons from Amon.
"Relying solely on himself and those few Grade 1 Sealed Artifacts, Lumian Lee couldn't save his teammates because Voisin Sanson and others would also assist Higdon shortly.
"Lumian Lee now has only one choice, to ascend to demigod on the spot. But Amon is unwilling to help him shatter the Sword of Courage, returning the Sword of Courage to a Beyonder characteristic, and his Iron-blooded Knight ritual is still incomplete.
"Amon tells him that the only help He would provide is to shatter the Black Tear, give him the supplementary ingredients missing for the Despair potion, and send him to Morora to complete the ritual using the exiles there, ascending to Demoness of Despair.
"Becoming a Demoness of Despair, Lumian Lee, wielding the Sword of Courage, successfully saves his teammates. Then, he would switch between the Demoness and Hunter pathways, spiraling upwards. This doesn't need to be symmetrical, depending on the situation, aiming to fulfill the phrase 'pure yin does not last, pure

yang does not grow, yin contains yang, yang contains yin, the union of yin and yang gives rise to everything.'
"This is the only correct way to approach the peak power of the two calamity pathways. Alista Tudor and Cheek's attempts failed; not only did They fail to succeed, but They also created a big trouble.
"In this process, Aurore Lee's soul fragments will gradually revive when Lumian Lee is in the Demoness state.
"If Lumian Lee can ultimately defeat Red Angel Medici and Primordial Demoness Cheek, mastering the peak power of the two calamity pathways, Aurore Lee's personality and soul fragments can rely on Lumian's own spirit and flesh to resurrect. Then, they can merge with his consciousness, suppressing the corruption of inevitability, and become his female form, controlling the feminine side of calamity. This is the true union of yin and yang, similar to the Medici evil spirit's current state but closer to the peak.
"This is also the only way to truly revive Aurore Lee."
Amon paused, looking at Lumian, who seemed to have turned into a statue, raised His chin slightly, revealed a faint smile, and recited the final sentence, "Can you accept such an outcome?"

Chapter 878: "Sinner"

Chapter 878 "Sinner"

Hearing Amon's question, Lumian seemed to break free from a long nightmare, only to find reality was an even more despairing abyss.

His body trembled slightly as he used all his strength to squeeze out a sound from his throat.

"Isn't He afraid? Afraid that after I truly master the peak power of calamity, I'll seek revenge against Him?"

Amon laughed. "By making such a choice, He shows He's willing to face all possible futures and accept the worst outcome.

"It makes no difference to Him whether it's you or Medici, whether you submit, give up, be angry, or hate. If either of you manages to master the peak power of calamity, seek revenge against Him, disrupt His plans, or even pull Him down from His divine throne, He would still not regret it and would acknowledge the result."

At this point, Amon paused before continuing, "Because He was born to bear all sins."

Lumian fell silent, his fists clenched tightly, with thin streams of bright red blood seeping through the gaps.

Amon glanced at the transparent but dark sky. "Time is running out. You must make your choice."

Lumian's lips moved a few times before he suddenly laughed, a mixture of anger and self-mockery.

His voice was hoarse and low as he said, "I'm willing to go—to Morora. I will try all possible ways to revive Aurore, including the only method He mentioned, but I will not accept the outcome He predetermined!"

Amon chuckled, adjusting His monocle on His right eye.

"You don't need to tell me the second half of your sentence. My task is only to send you to Morora and make you a Demoness of Despair. Whether you accept that ending, you'll have to face Him and tell Him yourself."

With that, Amon raised His right hand and gently grasped, making the Black Tear forehead accessory magically detach from the Traveler's Bag and appear in His palm.

The black, tear-shaped Sealed Artifact silently shattered, transforming into specks of faint light. These lights quickly converged into a shrunken, withered, blackened, translucent heart.

Amon then reached towards Voisin Sanson, grabbing two items.

One was a small glass vial containing dark green liquid, and the other, three silver fragments.

After making his decision, Lumian's emotions finally settled a bit. He no longer felt as out of control as before—his body had been trembling uncontrollably, and his thoughts had been fixated on destruction.

Seeing the two items in Amon's hand, Lumian suddenly paused.

Voisin Sanson had the supplementary ingredients for the Demoness of Despair?

He was also the one who suggested lifting the seal earlier...

Amon mentioned that some participants in the Hostel plan received hidden guidance in Fourth Epoch Trier's unique environment without being noticed by the evil gods... Was Voisin Sanson one of them?

Voisin Sanson himself probably didn't remember being guided, thinking he escaped Fourth Epoch Trier purely with the help of the Mirror People, and later unknowingly did some seemingly unimportant abnormal things?

Amon couldn't break out of Mr. Fool's seal on His own, so there had to be a role to accomplish the unsealing task without killing me—the test subject... Voisin Sanson's stated goal allowed him to do this without suspicion...

That individual tacitly allowed the Hostel plan to happen, without much interference or obstruction, and didn't ruin Red Angel's plan, all to prepare for now?

Realizing this, Lumian instinctively scoffed to ease his emotions. "So He can't accept just any outcome after all."

He did so much to ensure the expected result!

Amon smiled. "Willing to accept the worst outcome doesn't mean not striving for the best. And now, would you refuse to go to Morora and become a Demoness of Despair?"

Lumian fell silent again.

Amon let the Demoness of Despair Beyonder characteristic and the two supplementary materials fly towards Lumian, casually remarking, "This Beyonder characteristic will continuously spread plagues, both mundane and mystical, and you'll also be infected."

After Lumian caught them, Amon smiled again. "Do you know what the Sequence 2 of the Inevitability pathway is?"

"Sinner," Lumian replied, determined to go to Morora and complete his task no matter how painful or reluctant he felt.

"And Sequence 1?" Amon continued to quiz him unhurriedly.

Lumian shook his head.

He really didn't know.

Amon explained with a smile, "Sequence 1 is Angel of Redemption, but to me, it's not as useful as Sinner.

"The past Sinner, the present Sufferer, and the future Angel of

Redemption form the trinity of the Inevitability pathway."
Amon adjusted His monocle, smiling more prominently.
"And a Sinner has the ability to revert their state to any past moment, with the duration depending on specific circumstances."
Revert to any past moment... Lumian suddenly remembered that Madam Magician mentioned Amon, the King of Angels from ancient times, once briefly became a god!
Amon turned, smiling. "Of course, involving the uniqueness and power of a true god requires the current holder's consent. That Celestial Worthy has already diverted most of His attention to influence Project Vortex, so He certainly can't interfere with The Fool on this matter, and The Fool you believe in shouldn't object."
As He spoke, Amon spread His arms as if embracing returning power.
The monocle on His right eye shone brilliantly.
Before Lumian could react, he saw the obstacles and barriers blocking access to Morora in the special mirror world disappear, allowing him to enter the City of Exiles smoothly and without hindrance.
High above in the special mirror world, the figure wearing a golden crown and black dress nodded at Amon, not attempting to interfere with Lumian.
She was mirror Roselle. In this matter, She had placed bets on both sides, ensuring that the real Roselle wouldn't completely perish. Whether the real Roselle became a puppet of the Uncertain Mist or died to await another resurrection opportunity, it wouldn't affect Her existence and would even gradually make Her the main body.
In the next second, Amon's figure vanished from Lumian's sight.
The paper He had been reading silently floated down, completely blank—a sheet of white paper.
...
Before the bloody altar in the ancient castle.
Ma'am Hermit suddenly spoke, "The voice from that painting has weakened."
Madam Magician looked up, slightly puzzled and apprehensive. "The sealing power of the barrier has strengthened. The true god of the Door pathway has returned... No, it's not Mr. Fool, it's more like... more like Amon!"
Using her angelic intuition about the true god of her pathway, Madam Magician quickly made a judgment.
"How could Amon become the true god of the Door pathway again?"
Miss Justice's heart stirred. "Did Mr. Fool or that Celestial Worthy lend Him power?"
If it was the former, it would be great news for disrupting the

vortex ritual. If it was the latter, it would be serious.
"Based on current developments, it should be Mr. Fool," Madam Magician said thoughtfully.
At this moment, the Ma'am Hermit, receiving Miss Justice's report, moved her eyes slightly.
"Since the influence of the mysterious voice has weakened, the power of fate must have lessened too. Now, there should be a chance to destroy this painting!"
As she spoke, the holder of the Major Arcana card holder reached out to Madam Magician, asking for the iron cigar case.
...
In the sea near Port Santa, the seal, previously weakened by internal gray fog and external gnawing, instantly became as strong as before.
The School of Deliciousness's previous efforts were all in vain.
Deep in the primitive island, before the Black Emperor mausoleum.
The thick, pervasive white mist abruptly contracted towards the core as if squeezed by an invisible force.
The mark left by The Fool inside Roselle strengthened, alleviating some of the corruption caused by the Uncertain Mist.
Roselle's twisted, painful expression improved somewhat.
The eyes of Perle, scattered in different parts of the mist, saw a figure suddenly appear in midair. The figure wore a black robe, a matching pointed hat, and a monocle on His right eye.
He is... Isn't it said that external forces can't interfere with the vortex's operation? Perle, still barely alive, had this question when she saw the figure in mid-air look down at her, smiling happily as He introduced Himself, "Is this our first meeting? I am Termiboros."
"..." Perle suddenly felt as if her intelligence had been stolen.
How could it be Termiboros?
However, my spiritual intuition tells me that He is indeed Termiboros...
...
In the special mirror world,
Seeing Amon's figure soar upwards and vanish from sight, Lumian finally understood why He had said that whether it was the vortex ritual or another plan, it didn't matter compared to consuming Termiboros and becoming an Angel of the Inevitability pathway.
This meant there would always be a high-ranking being capable of temporarily exerting a true god's power, lurking in the shadows, waiting to strike at a crucial moment!
Lumian glanced at the white paper on the ground, then looked at

Franca, Jenna, and the others struggling against Higdon with the help of the Pride Armor and the Demoness's black flames. He quickly put away the Sword of Courage, gripping the Beyonder characteristic and supplementary ingredients of the Demoness of Despair, and activated the black mark on his right shoulder.

He traversed the special mirror world and returned to Morora, the City of Exiles.

Immediately, he reconnected with 0-01, using the Grade 0 Sealed Artifact to help bear the damage and influence of the Demoness' plague.

Then, Lumian stood on the steps before the Knowledge Cathedral, gazing at the wide, deserted square. He began summoning the exiles most affected by 0-01 to gather quickly, aiming to save time.

Chapter 879: Demoness of Despair

Chapter 879 Demoness of Despair

In the next two to three minutes, a large number of exiles poured into the square in front of the Knowledge Cathedral. Some, accidentally bumped into, chose to duel on the spot. Others quietly straightened their necks so they wouldn't be too crooked. Some sang loudly out of boredom, while others played a game of slapping each other...

Lumian stood on the steps, holding the Beyonder characteristic of the Demoness of Despair, expressionless as he watched these exiled felons.

Time is running out... Lumian silently whispered to himself, turning to look at the Knowledge Cathedral once more, but still did not see Archbishop Heraberg of Morora.

Finally resigned, he turned his gaze back to the exiles, who almost filled the square.

There were definitely more than thirty thousand.

Lumian suddenly started laughing, his body trembling with mirth.

Though he seemed to have many choices, considering environmental factors, time constraints, the current situation, and his own obsessions, only one path remained.

The only road before him.

After laughing for over ten seconds, Lumian, dressed in a white shirt, black vest, dark trousers, and laced shoes, stepped down from the steps and walked into the crowd.

The exiles near the Knowledge Cathedral began to feel something was wrong. Their bodies weakened, and when they tried to slap their opponents, it felt more like caressing their faces.

Some instinctively wanted to flee but found their legs powerless, their bodies heavy, moving only slowly.

Whoosh, whoosh, whoosh. White-blue fireballs shot out from around Lumian, flying over the exiles infected with mystical diseases and landing at the edges of the square, which the exiles strangely ignored.

Rumble!

The fireballs exploded simultaneously, surrounding the square in a hell of white flames. The temperature soared, and thick smoke billowed.

Thud, thud, thud. Countless exiles, whose conditions had worsened, fell to the ground, watching as other felons with some strength left trampled over them. They stared at the white flames lighting up the sky, inching closer to them.

Pain and despair quickly filled their hearts, consuming their

sanity.
Some wanted to call for help but could only make weak sounds.
Rumble!
Amid continuous explosions, Lumian walked out of the square, into the spreading sea of flames, and into the nearest street.
Rumble!
The houses on both sides of the street either collapsed under the white-blue fireballs or were directly ignited, rising into fierce flames like torches.
The felons in the square fell one by one, feeling helpless against the disease, experiencing pain and despair, waiting for death.
Lumian took out a glass bottle, placing the Beyonder characteristic of the Demoness of Despair, Plague Mother Serpent's bile, fragments of a Silver Hunter, blood of various plague victims, and fresh mistletoe into it one by one.
Bubbles gurgled up, and the dark purple potion shimmered with a rosy light.
Lumian gazed at the potion, laughing hoarsely. "Don't worry, I already know my insignificance. I will embrace despair and the path of the Demoness.
"But this is to avoid being manipulated in the future, to choose my own ending!"
With that, he walked forward, raising the bottle to his lips and tilting his head back to drink.
The exiles still standing in the square suddenly felt their pain and despair condense into something tangible, turning into invisible threads extending toward the burning street, toward the figure with his back to them.
They finally "awoke," but were too sick to fight the perpetrator. Some were even already engulfed by flames, burning their bodies.
They saw the figure walking step by step among the burning buildings, walking through the hellish streets, under the bright red sky. His hair floated up, growing longer, blacker, and thicker.
In the air, two stars seemed to light up, and the white-blue flames in the area suddenly turned pitch black.
This blackness spread like a flood, quickly drowning all light, making the fiery hell quiet, deep, and dark.
...
In the special mirror world, in the dark scene of the abandoned park where Franca and others fought against Higdon of the Order of All Extinction.
Covered in greenish-yellow mucus, Higdon had split into four, each seeking different targets, while black flames of the Demoness burned quietly around Franca and Jenna.

The black flames burned the spirituality of the disease but were dimmed by the decaying power, eventually extinguishing.
If it weren't for discovering that Higdon's disease, having some spirituality, could be ignited by the Demoness's black flames to slow its spread and intensity, Franca believed she and Jenna would have already exhausted their Mirror Substitutes and awaited death.
Meanwhile, the Pride Armor played a crucial role, almost unaffected by Higdon's diseases, and not corroded by the decaying power. It remained energetic, chasing down Higdon whenever he dared to attack from behind, occasionally unleashing a Hurricane of Light.
During the battle, Franca and Jenna noticed another problem.
They couldn't tell if it was because Higdon had no brain or if the demigod was just unlucky, but his Certain Death attacks often missed.
Combined, the two Demonesses and Anthony, who used his Psychological Invisibility to stay out of the decaying range, barely managed to hold on for nearly nine minutes before Higdon—a demigod. Occasionally, they even felt that Higdon lacked the oppressive presence of a true demigod, seeming like a poor-quality product.
But even so, they couldn't find an opportunity to escape and discovered that their enemies were multiplying—from two at the start to four now, with one splitting off to find Ludwig.
Moreover, although individual Higdon fragments seemed weaker than a true demigod, each fragment retained the same level of power, making them collectively terrifying. Franca guessed the number of splits should have a limit, but not too many.
I have two Mirror Substitutes left. Jenna probably has one... Anthony, although attacked less and outside the range, only had two to begin with and has used one... Franca analyzed the situation quickly while constantly repositioning to avoid Higdon's sudden Sure Hit attacks.
As for Lugano, when Higdon blocked him at the start, Franca signaled him to run as far as he could and hide.
It proved to be the right call. Higdon's targets were Ludwig and the two Demonesses, making no effort to stop Lugano from fleeing and not splitting more Higdons to chase him.
Continuous use of black flames is also draining our spirituality. Jenna and I can't hold on much longer... Franca considered whether to use the last Mirror Traversal of the Ice Amulet now to delay for a while and see if there would be a turning point.
It could also give Anthony a chance to survive.

The Hypnotist was also not Higdon's target and had Psychological Invisibility.
Just as Franca was about to signal Jenna to approach, she suddenly saw greenish-yellow drops forming behind Jenna, quickly condensing into Higdon.
Almost simultaneously, Franca noticed from Jenna's worried expression that something was happening behind her too.
Without hesitation, both Demonesses activated Mirror Substitution.
The next second, two Higdons spread out like dirty, slimy "blankets," wrapping Franca and Jenna in a Sure Hit.
A cracking sound followed.
Meanwhile, Anthony, quietly lurking at the edge of the park, leaning against a half-wall, suddenly saw a greenish-yellow mucus-covered Higdon appear beside him.
He had been discovered after all.
Higdon pushed with both hands, sending a greenish-black light ball towards Anthony.
Crack!
Anthony used his last Mirror Substitution, his figure appearing behind this Higdon.
Seeing this, Anthony had an epiphany.
An opportunity!
He didn't flee but raised his Winter is Coming revolver, aimed at Higdon, and pulled the trigger.
Certain Death!
A yellowish bullet, tinged with dim green, crossed the short distance, hitting Higdon.
Covered in greenish-yellow mucus, Higdon froze, his body quickly disintegrating into small drops, falling to the ground without any spirituality.
This Higdon was dead.
But the other three Higdons remained unaffected.
After confirming this, Franca and Jenna felt utter despair.
Their previous plan involved the two Demonesses as bait, giving Anthony a chance to shoot one Higdon with the Certain Death bullet, hoping to kill all Higdons.
Unexpectedly, the Certain Death effect only worked on the one hit.
Moments later, they saw the Pride Armor hit by a Certain Death attack, metal fragments falling from its chest, standing still.
Jenna gritted her teeth, ready to forgo the ritual and gamble on forcibly advancing by consuming the ingredients of the Demoness of Affliction.
At least it would restore her spirituality.

Even if she failed, she could turn into a monster, giving Franca a chance to escape.
Before Jenna could reach into her Traveler's Bag, another figure appeared at the edge of the area.
It was Voisin Sanson, with his blond hair turning white, who had chased them here!
Jenna and Franca's hearts sank rapidly. Jenna no longer hesitated.
At this moment, above one of the Higdons, a black iron sword, burning with white-blue flames, suddenly fell from the sky, accurately piercing the top of this Higdon's head.
Boom!
This Higdon exploded into fragments, the spreading white-blue flames turning into silent blackness, engulfing each piece.
The fragments never reappeared, and a figure quickly appeared in the eyes of Franca, Jenna, and Anthony.

Chapter 880: Walking Destruction

Chapter 880 Walking Destruction

In an instant, the figure became clear.

Everyone present, including Higdon and Voisin Sanson, was stunned.

The person had a slim face, light blue eyes resembling clear and dreamy lakes up in the highlands, a perfectly shaped nose, and lips neither too thick nor too thin. Her features were striking and graceful, with a peculiar sharpness that seemed to pierce through any defense of body and mind, straight to the soul, hitting its weakest spot.

At the same time, she had a cold demeanor, her face void of any smile, as if she had just killed thousands of people. Her long, straight black hair gently floated in the aftermath of the explosion.

At this moment, Franca recalled a description she had read before her transmigration: "Her beauty is aggressive..."

As she pondered, Franca felt a strong sense of familiarity.

Why does she look a bit like Lumian?

No, not a bit, a lot—like Lumian feminized and beautified, with some Photoshopped editing...

Right, she's holding the Sword of Courage!

My spiritual intuition tells me she is Lumian!

Demoness of Despair! Lumian escaped Voisin Sanson's pursuit, entered Morora, and without enough teammates to perform the Iron-blooded Knight ritual, chose to use the exiles there to advance to Demoness of Despair?

That's ruthless... something Lumian would do...

No, did he choose all the options I gave him?

I must admit—more beautiful than I imagined...

Uh, who helped him shatter the Black Tear?

As Franca's thoughts raced, Jenna shouted in pleasant surprise, "Lumian!"

The enchanted Higdon and Voisin Sanson snapped back to reality.

Lumian's figure disappeared again, reappearing behind another Higdon.

The Higdon covered in greenish-yellow mucus was prepared, instantly disintegrating into countless droplets.

However, around him, an almost impermeable invisible web suddenly appeared.

The web covered an area of about thirty meters, decaying rapidly while trapping and binding Higdon's greenish-yellow droplets.

Silent, destructive black flames surged from the Demoness-form Lumian, igniting the nearly decayed web and engulfing every

greenish-yellow fragment, stripping them of all spirituality.
"Idiot!" Lumian cursed expressionlessly, his figure disappearing once more.
I didn't continue attacking but used Charm to buy time to weave this web, anticipating your escape!
Though Lumian used teleportation and invisibility, the black flames from his body did not extinguish.
After burning the web and the trapped Higdon fragments, the flames quickly spread across most of the park-like ruins, igniting the pervasive disease in the air.
Feeling the power of the disease and decay significantly diminishing, Franca didn't search for Lumian. Instead, she tacitly charged at Voisin Sanson.
She sensed Lumian wanted to eliminate Higdon first, so they needed to hold off Voisin Sanson, the Circle Inhabitant, to prevent him from interfering in Lumian and Higdon's battle.
Every moment counted!
Jenna had a similar feeling, quickly hiding and circling around Voisin Sanson, ready to support Franca and Anthony.
Among them, Anthony could inflict the most damage on a demigod!
Anthony used Psychological Invisibility again, cautiously approaching Voisin Sanson.
Voisin Sanson was still confused and fearful—he couldn't figure out where he went wrong trying to unseal and release Lord Termiboros, which allowed Lumian Lee to escape.
For a devout follower of Inevitability, this was a mistake redeemable only by death.
As soon as he regained control, Voisin Sanson hurried to the battlefield of Higdon and Lumian's companions, hoping to capture Lumian's teammates and force him back to save them, thus regaining control over him.
Unexpectedly, Lumian had indeed returned, but as a Demoness, a demigod-level Demoness!
If not for the fact that his lust-enhancing contract wasn't with a demigod creature and he had become a demigod-level Ascetic, he would have already lost control under that soul-piercing Charm.
Quickly, Voisin Sanson spotted Lumian's figure, emerging behind the last Higdon.
Voisin Sanson was about to teleport over and hunt him down when Franca's figure appeared behind him.
Franca raised her left hand, adorned with a black iron spiked ring, her eyes glowing with two streaks of lightning.
Psychic Piercing!

Voisin Sanson's body shook slightly, his soul feeling a brief pain.
Immediately, a transparent figure resembling him grew from his back, coldly gazing at Franca.
Crack!
Franca used her last Mirror Substitution, the fragments falling lifelessly to the ground.
Simultaneously, Jenna appeared several meters to the side.
She held a brown leather scroll, chanting a word in Hermes, "Sun!"
The scroll burst into radiant sunlight, enveloping Voisin Sanson in its holy and fiery light.
Though the power of Inevitability was not evil, corrupt, or dark, it contained a will that, for Sanson, was foreign and had to be expelled.
Of course, after reaching the demigod level, Voisin Sanson's consciousness had been corrupted and influenced by that will, aligning more closely with its master, so the purification effect wouldn't be too significant. However, his contracted creatures included dark, evil, and corrupt types, some of which feared purification. So, under the sunlight, Voisin Sanson couldn't help but close his eyes, raise his right hand to shield his face, and black smoke sizzled from his body.
As a demigod, Voisin Sanson wouldn't suffer severe damage from such Purification and would soon recover, but this gave Anthony a chance.
Anthony stopped, raised his Winter is Coming revolver, and pulled the trigger after a simple aim.
Bang!
A dark yellow bullet flew toward Voisin Sanson.
Sure Hit!
Anthony wasn't sure if Voisin Sanson had a substitute ability, so he chose Sure Hit instead of Certain Death.
Clang!
The bullet hit Voisin Sanson, producing a metallic sound, tearing his clothes, and causing his skin and flesh to rupture.
In the instant he was enveloped by sunlight, unsure of what he might encounter if he teleported away, Voisin Sanson activated a contract ability to metallize himself, enhancing his defense without amplifying the effect of the sunlight.
If the next attack couldn't be stopped even with metallization, Voisin Sanson could trigger the Circle Inhabitant effect, resetting his body state.
During the desperate blockade by Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, the last Higdon, seemingly foreseeing this, suddenly grew two greenish-yellow mucus-covered arms from his back, pushing out a

dim green light at the Demoness of Despair, Lumian.
Certain Death!
The light hit Lumian's tall, perfect body but passed through.
The figure wavered like ripples, quickly shattering—just an illusion.
At this moment, multiple Lumian figures with black hair lightly floating appeared around Higdon, all wielding the Sword of Courage, slashing at the Sequence 4 demigod of the Order of All Extinction.
This was the demigod-level Demoness's utilization of the special mirror world, with each figure possibly being a mirror illusion or the real Lumian hidden among them!
Higdon's body suddenly disintegrated into dim greenish light, indiscriminately using the Certain Death effect.
This was both an area attack and an escape!
At this moment, another Lumian appeared in midair.
He held the Sword of Courage with both hands, descending heavily and stabbing the ground.
Rumble!
White-blue flames followed the violent explosion, quickly engulfing the area, consuming the dim greenish light striking the various Lumian figures, not giving them a chance to split into more Higdons.
Immediately, the white-blue flames turned into silent black, igniting and devouring all spirituality in the area with a destructive presence.
Smack!
As the black flames receded, a fist-sized lump of greenish-yellow mucus fell to the ground.
This was deliberately left by Lumian.
He grabbed the mucus without fearing infection, holding it in his hand and smearing it on a mirror.
His hand, covered in black flames, pressed onto it.
The greenish-yellow mucus let out a shrill scream.
In another dark ruin, another Higdon had just found Ludwig and was about to reach for the little boy with a ravenous expression when silent black flames bizarrely erupted from within him.
He was quickly engulfed by the black flames, turning into lifeless liquid, dripping to the ground.
After dealing with Higdon, Lumian teleported directly in front of Voisin Sanson, signaling Franca, Jenna, and Anthony, who had no Mirror Substitutes left, to retreat.
In Voisin Sanson's eyes, just recovering from the fierce sunlight, the coldly beautiful Demoness curled her lips into a soul-capturing

smile.
Voisin Sanson froze for a moment, hearing a slightly magnetic, pleasant voice in his ear: "Hope your Circle Inhabitant effect still works; I don't want to kill you just once."

Chapter 881: Three Times

Chapter 881 Three Times

Voisin Sanson felt there was no warmth in the voice's laughter, and he suddenly shuddered, snapping back to reality.

His first reaction was to quickly teleport out of this area, because Lumian had become a potion pathway demigod, and still had three companions assisting him. Meanwhile, Sanson's ally, the other demigod Higdon, had been completely killed by Lumian in a very short time.

No matter how devoutly he believed in the great Circle of Inevitability, no matter how urgently he longed to rescue Lord Termiboros, the Angel of Inevitability, today, Voisin Sanson was not so blind as to misread the current situation.

He knew he only had two choices: stay and fight to the death, or flee quickly and wait for another opportunity.

At this moment, it was not difficult to decide which to choose.

As the black mark on his body activated, Voisin Sanson's figure disappeared from where he stood.

The next second, he appeared dozens of meters away, facing a dark, transparent, almost glass-like barrier ahead.

The barrier flickered in and out of visibility, sealing off an area the size of a plaza.

Lumian, his body now slightly slimmer, held the huge iron-black straight sword and did not stop Voisin Sanson's attempt. He only said in a slightly mocking tone, "This is the special mirror world, and a demigod-level Demoness can utilize the power of this world to some extent.

"If you want to break the mirror barrier and 'teleport' out, there's only one way—defeat me, kill me."

Voisin Sanson struggled for a moment but failed to succeed. He had no choice but to turn around and face Lumian.

Then he saw the other reveal a beautiful but dangerous smile.

Lumian did not act immediately, because he was listening to the beating of his own heart.

The seal of Mr. Fool on him had lost its effect, but Amon had left some power in the original position, preventing the soul fragments of Aurore and others from leaking out and perishing completely.

Of course, this was only a temporary restriction. In two or three days at most, the seal would completely dissipate.

And because of the vast difference in strength between the two seals, Lumian felt that the distance between himself and his sister had shortened considerably, as if he could hear her voice and receive her thoughts.

Thump, thump, thump.
That heartbeat was familiar and warm.
"Do you see? Voisin Sanson is right in front of us, that heretic who always made you have nightmares, who scared you into fleeing Trier.
"Do you see? He's afraid."
Lumian whispered these two sentences with a gentle expression, then raised his head and cast his gaze toward Voisin Sanson.
During this process, he teleported several times in succession, changing his position to prevent Voisin Sanson's attacks from affecting him.
Lumian slightly arched his back and gripped the Sword of Courage with both hands.
The next second, his figure suddenly faded, blinking to the front of Voisin Sanson, seemingly intending to ignore the other's counterattack and forcibly cleave the target in two.
Voisin Sanson did not hesitate because of how beautiful this image was or how alluring this figure was. Relying on the endurance ability of an Ascetic, he concentrated dark green light in his eyes.
As the beam surged forth, Lumian had already become transparent, turning into a mirror.
Smack!
Just as the mirror shattered, Lumian's figure appeared behind Voisin Sanson, maintaining the downward slashing motion with the iron-black straight sword.
Voisin Sanson quickly let the semi-transparent figure resembling himself emerge, staring at Lumian.
But Lumian's figure suddenly became illusory, as if reflected in a mirror.
At the same time, Lumian materialized above Voisin Sanson's head, holding the iron-black straight sword burning with white-blue flames; he completed the last motion of this attack with a jumping slash.
Clang!
The Sword of Courage struck the junction between Voisin Sanson's neck and shoulder, directly cleaving open the skin and flesh gleaming with metallic luster, staining it with bright red blood.
Immediately after, a violent explosion occurred, and Voisin Sanson's body was about to be torn apart.
At this moment, Lumian was slightly dazed, while Voisin Sanson instantly returned to his original state, teleporting to the other side of the sealed area.
Lumian did not pursue closely, but turned his body to face the white-haired fatalist and said with a smile, "First time."

Voisin Sanson immediately felt his scalp tingle, understanding that the other meant he had already killed him once, with many more times to come.
He immediately activated a contract ability called "Phantom".
He suddenly split into dozens of copies of himself, and each Voisin Sanson seemed capable of teleporting, appearing in different positions and corners of the sealed area.
They simultaneously raised their right hands, their eyes reflecting the corresponding mercury-colored illusory river of Lumian.
This could be either Magnified Fate or Fate Exchange!
And Lumian seemed unable to distinguish which Voisin Sanson was real, unable to effectively prevent it.
Lumian's light blue eyes smiled without mirth.
He glanced at the Sword of Courage and found that Voisin Sanson's blood, which should have stained it, had disappeared, as if returning to the body of that Circle Inhabitant.
Lumian was not surprised. He suddenly threw the Sword of Courage, hurling it towards the center of the sealed area.
The huge iron-black straight sword fell to the ground like a cannonball.
Rumble!
A massive explosion suddenly occurred, shaking even the special mirror world, and white-blue flames quickly covered every inch of ground and every bit of air in the sealed area.
This was why Lumian had limited the battlefield to the size of a plaza.
The phantoms created by Voisin Sanson were quickly destroyed. After struggling to resist for two seconds, his true body shattered, triggering the Circle Inhabitant effect.
Lumian himself was also engulfed by the explosion, the flames scorching his skin, the shockwave tearing at his body.
Then, he turned into a mirror.
The mirror immediately shattered.
As the explosion quickly subsided, Lumian looked at Voisin Sanson, who was far away from him, and smiled more obviously.
"Second time."
His clear light blue eyes, like highland lakes, still held no mirth.
As he spoke, invisible spider silk extended from Lumian's body, binding the hilt of the Sword of Courage and dragging it back.
Realizing that the area-of-effect attack of the iron-black straight sword could completely cover this area, and that none of his contract abilities were sufficient to withstand such an explosion, Voisin Sanson was overcome with a feeling called despair.
Although before chasing here, he had already canceled the

previous Circle Inhabitant effect and waited for the restriction to end, resetting the same Circle Inhabitant with nine more chances to trigger, now with seven left, if Lumian were to throw that iron-black straight sword again and again, repeating the area-of-effect explosion from earlier, he didn't think seven Circle Inhabitant effects would have much significance.
Unless that iron-black straight sword needed some time between such attacks.
Voisin Sanson dared not gamble. He chose to end the Circle Inhabitant effect on himself.
His right hand pressed towards Lumian's approaching figure from a distance, and silver-white lines with black edges appeared in his eyes.
These lines twisted like snakes, framing Lumian's figure in the middle, then quickly connected head to tail.
Voisin Sanson wanted to make Lumian a Circle Inhabitant!
Different types of Circle Inhabitant effects didn't need to wait for restrictions to end.
And in the same time period, Voisin Sanson, at only Sequence 4, could maintain only one "Circle".
His preset condition now was that if Lumian made any move to attack him, it would trigger the Circle Inhabitant effect, resetting the state of this Demoness of Despair—such harsh conditions couldn't be placed on an area-of-effect Circle Inhabitant, and would be suppressed by the target's level, not achieving the best effect, unlike the area-of-effect Circle Inhabitant which could affect even Angel-level Beyonders.
The Inevitability power Voisin Sanson attached to this Circle Inhabitant could only maintain three cycles. Once it exceeded three times and started the fourth, the destined fate would arrive.
Of course, what exactly this destined fate would be needed to be chosen by Voisin Sanson himself.
Because he had to complete this "Circle" quickly, otherwise Lumian could launch an attack first, Voisin Sanson had no time to discern carefully. He just glanced and chose a tributary from Lumian's illusory mercury-colored long river, placing it into the circle.
It was the tributary of the Mirror People being hostile to this Demoness of Despair, which could help Voisin Sanson destroy the surrounding mirror barriers, giving him a chance to teleport and escape.
The worse the destined fate, the worse the final result, the more Inevitability power Voisin Sanson had to invest, and the longer it would take to complete the Circle Inhabitant, which was not suitable for the current situation.

As soon as this "circle" was completed, Lumian immediately had a spiritual intuition and put down the Sword of Courage in his hand, no longer advancing.
Seeing this, Voisin Sanson instinctively concentrated dark green light in his eyes.
Those two beams shot out like light, instantly falling on Lumian, who once again turned into a mirror, his body materializing not far from his original position.
Seeing this, Voisin Sanson suddenly froze.
Why didn't Harrison and I think of using this method to trap Lumian when facing his attacks?
That way we could have resolved the battle faster, without needing to be killed several times...
And now, he still had who knows how many Mirror Substitutions.
Voisin Sanson quickly decided to provoke Lumian to attack. His eyes once again lit up with a dark green hue.
Just then, even with the endurance of an Ascetic, Voisin Sanson couldn't help but cough once, causing the dark green beam in his eyes to deviate from its target and fall on the distant mirror barrier.
The barrier was slightly damaged but instantly repaired itself.
Voisin Sanson began to feel his body weakening, each breath feeling like his airways were being scorched by flames.
His spirituality was also rapidly depleting.
Disease... I've been infected by the Demoness's disease! Voisin Sanson suddenly raised his head, just in time to see Lumian reveal a mocking but beautiful smile.
"Why did you think the explosion and incineration from earlier could directly kill my mystical pathogens?
"They can persist for quite a while longer."
Voisin Sanson's heart tightened, and he frantically attacked Lumian, but only managed to shatter three or four mirrors.
And with each ineffective attack, Voisin Sanson grew more desperate. He seemed to already see the worst outcome approaching, yet was powerless to reverse it, only able to watch helplessly as the bell of death tolled.
He even tried to metallize his body, but the disease could still infect him, eating into him.
Cough, cough, cough!
After many more attempts, Voisin Sanson finally lost the strength to stand. He collapsed to the ground, coughing violently as he fell.
He no longer had the power to maintain the Circle Inhabitant effect on Lumian.
Lumian walked step by step to the front of this Circle Inhabitant,

looking down at him from above, and said with a mocking smile, "Only three times?"
Voisin Sanson raised his head with difficulty, looking at that beautiful and cold face, feeling as if he was rapidly falling into a bottomless abyss.
That feeling was the epitome of despair.
Lumian bound Voisin Sanson with a spider web, suspending him in the air, then formed a sharp, thick ice pillar beneath him.
"Goodbye, give my regards to your master," Lumian said softly, retracting all the spider silk.
Pfft!
Voisin Sanson fell heavily, impaled by the ice pillar.
His eyes bulged, and blood flowed beneath him.

Chapter 882: The True Purpose

Chapter 882 The True Purpose

Seeing Voisin Sanson's eyes bulge, his breath gradually fading, his face twisted in pain and palpable despair, Lumian reached behind into the Traveler's Bag and took out the silver Lie earring, putting it on his left ear.

The dying Voisin Sanson suddenly saw a familiar figure.

That figure had light blue eyes, beautiful features, and long, thick golden hair.

It was Aurore.

But this time, there was no longer fear or terror on Aurore's face, only a faint smile.

"Gasp..." Voisin Sanson uttered his final sound.

He died like that, with his eyes bulging.

Lumian returned to his original appearance, casually saying as he removed the Lie earring, "You died so quickly? I wanted to thank you for helping me digest the Despair potion."

When he had just advanced, the Despair potion was already mostly digested, and now it had progressed even further.

Lumian wasn't surprised by this. According to the mystical knowledge he had learned from Madam Magician, the essence of the acting method was actually to gradually align one's mental and spiritual state with the core symbolism of the potion through acting, thereby bypassing restrictions and completing digestion step by step. His state before and after taking the Despair potion could be said to be very close to the name "Despair".

Lumian wasn't despairing about having to become a Demoness. For faster advancement, better handling of possible apocalyptic scenarios, and earlier resurrection of his sister, he had considered similar things more than once. After all, he would have the chance to switch to the Hunter pathway and become a man again later.

He despaired that he was forced to do this and had no way to refuse. He despaired that his previous efforts, struggles, and anger were all under someone else's arrangements, and that he would have to follow someone else's arrangements to walk the path of the Demoness afterwards.

Of course, when despair reached its peak, the desire and belief in his heart to become strong and change all this also intensified to the extreme.

"Is this what you wanted too?" Lumian whispered self-mockingly as he unsealed the area and let the remaining mystical pathogens dissipate completely.

Franca, Jenna, and Anthony had already hurried over after Voisin

Sanson was impaled on the ice pillar.
Lumian suddenly sensed something and turned his gaze to a certain spot in this dark ruin.
It was where the Order of All Extinction demigod Higdon had finally died.
There, points of green light with yellow tinges appeared out of thin air, rising upwards, only to be blocked by the barrier of the special mirror world.
This place preliminarily cuts off connections, preventing some bestowed power from returning? Lumian, with his experience, immediately made the corresponding judgment.
By this time, Franca and the others had run up to him.
Looking at that familiar yet beautiful and cold face, Franca opened her mouth, wanting to say something, but swallowed it back.
Jenna examined Lumian's current appearance, with only one thought in mind: It's good that he's still alive; it's best that everyone is still alive!
As for the rest, there was nothing to worry about.
Lumian pointed to those green lights with yellow tinges that were being blocked, his voice slightly magnetic and distinctly feminine as he said, "You can take a weapon over there and place it there."
This was actively creating a Beyonder weapon.
After Franca exchanged glances with Jenna and Anthony, she very proactively said without any modesty, "I'll go; I'm just in need of a weapon that can harm demigods."
She was the second highest Sequence Beyonder in the team—not counting Ludwig.
If she had had a similar weapon earlier, she might not have been so desperate when facing Higdon.
"Alright," Jenna expressed her attitude.
Anthony also nodded.
This didn't mean that if he put the Winter is Coming revolver under those light spots, this Beyonder weapon would reset its usage count. Given its own material composition, doing so would likely cause the corruption to exceed the limit, making it disintegrate directly.
Franca took out her Cannon Gun and ran towards the area permeated with green light spots with yellow tinges.
Lumian withdrew his gaze, looked at Jenna, and said with a slight smile, "Do you have any ring-shaped items?"
Jenna, looking at that smile that seemed to radiate its own light, was a bit surprised, but felt that now was not the time to ask.
She found a cheap silver bracelet and handed it to Lumian.
After taking it, Lumian placed the bracelet on top of Voisin

Sanson's corpse, waiting for the Inevitability power to be intercepted.
He then looked towards the distant transparent boundary that was like a mirror, seeing his own figure and face.
He made an effort to bring a smile to the corners of his mouth.
Because Aurore was just such a person who excelled at finding joy in suffering.
...
In front of the bloody altar, Ma'am Hermit was trying to find a way to combine the iron cigar case bearing Mr. Fool's aura with the Spear of Longinus to directly attack that oil painting depicting endless starry skies. Madam Magician, based on her rich knowledge of seals and powerful sealing abilities, carefully said, "The power of Inevitability is to make the interference of non-vortex ritual participants fail, while that terrifying voice affects all Beyonders similar to Listeners and Mystery Pryers. We may be able to solve them separately.
"The power of Inevitability is most likely dissipating from that circular ring on the oil painting. If we can plug it, shield it, we should be able to break free from the fate of interference being destined to fail, directly destroy the painting, and interrupt that terrifying voice."
"Plug it..." Ma'am Hermit immediately had an idea upon hearing Miss Justice's relay.
Taking advantage of the opportunity when the barrier seal was strengthened and the power of inevitability was significantly weakened, she cast a Warlock's spell, throwing that iron cigar case towards the oil painting on the altar, making it land accurately on the area painted with the silver-white ring with black edges.
The iron cigar case directly pressed down on that ring, shielding it, without leaving any trace exposed.
The little boy, Will, immediately said, "The power of Inevitability has decreased a lot more!"
Hearing this, Madam Magician quickly raised both arms, making the void around that oil painting bend, becoming dark and deep.
That space subsequently collapsed, shattering inch by inch, along with obvious cracks appearing on the oil painting and altar.
Miss Justice's face then protruded with patches of grayish-white scales, her body seeming to swell.
Similarly, Madam Judgment once again made a judgment.
Seeing her companions all launching attacks, Ma'am Hermit once again condensed that ancient spear stained with strange blood, throwing it towards the oil painting.
The oil painting, already in tatters under continuous attacks, was

completely pierced by this Spear of Longinus, nailed to the altar.
Immediately after, flames that seemed to encompass all colors erupted from the spear tip, completely igniting the oil painting that still had terrifying sounds leaking out, gradually burning it to ashes.
...
Above Trier, one Worm of Time after another crawled back into Mr. Star's body.
This Major Arcana card holder wearing red gloves said to Mr. Hanged Man in his original magnetic voice, "Amon has returned, and briefly regained the true god powers of the Error and Door pathways. I must return to the Cathedral of Serenity immediately."
As soon as he finished speaking, Mr. Star instantly disappeared.
Mr. Hanged Man cast his gaze downward, seeing the "Moon" transformed into crimson moonlight fall into the extremely compressed villa mist, while Saint Viève of the Eternal Blazing Sun Church shone into it in the form of sunlight.
...
Deep in the primitive island, outside the Black Emperor mausoleum.
Amon, at the edge of the astral world, looked down at Perle, at the Shadow of the Beauty Goddess and the miniature crimson moon still struggling to approach the corresponding light spots in the white mist, without any action.
"What are you still waiting for?" Roselle, his face gradually deepening in pain, asked.
"The same as what you're thinking now, the most arrogant thought you've ever had." Amon pinched the monocle on his right eye and smiled in response. "If it was just to eliminate the believers of Uncertain Mist, there would be no need for such trouble, nor would it be worth us revealing our trump cards."
Roselle glanced at the transaction still ongoing below and said, "That could bring great hidden dangers."
"When you make a decision, you have to accept the corresponding consequences. How can you accomplish something big without taking any risks or bearing any losses?" Amon said with a smile, then added, "This wasn't said by me, nor by you."
Before Roselle, who was being eroded more and more deeply and painfully by the white mist, could respond, Amon looked into the distance and said, "Those few from the Tarot Club are not bad, they don't need me to personally descend to destroy that oil painting."
Saying this, Amon, wearing a monocle, showed an eager expression. "Now, it's time."
He cast his gaze towards the Black Emperor mausoleum, towards

Bernadette who was being restricted by Roselle and unable to come out.
That Queen Mystic suddenly recalled something, feeling as if a certain memory had parted the mist and revealed itself.
She immediately stretched out her right hand, quickly sketching out one word after another bearing starlight in front of her.
These words, seemingly the source of all languages in the Northern and Southern Continents, quickly intertwined into strange symbols, opening a secret door that seemed to lead to the depths of the spirit world.
That secret door opened silently, and a gust of wind blew out, transforming into a man with a human upper body and an airflow lower body, wrapped in white cloth.
"The Magic Wishing Lamp and that item," Bernadette commanded in an authoritative voice.
That man with an airflow lower body respectfully responded, then took out two items from the white cloth wrapped around his body.
One looked like a miniature kettle, golden in color, covered with mysterious and complex symbols, with something like a wick protruding from the spout. This was 0-05—the Magic Wishing Lamp that the believers of Uncertain Mist wanted to obtain.
The other was a gray stone tablet, also engraved with those words that seemed to be the source of all languages in the Northern and Southern Continents, with numerous traces on its surface, mottled and ancient.

Chapter 883: The Poor Genie

Chapter 883 The Poor Genie

After receiving those two items, Bernadette had fully remembered what she and the former Angel of Imagination, now the True Creator—Adam—were cooperating on.

Now, it was the final step of this transaction. The gray stone tablet she held in her hand was the second Blasphemy Slate transformed from the remains of the Ancient Sun God, the predecessor of the True Creator, recording the names, potion formulas, and related rituals for each Sequence of the twenty-two paths of the divine!

Bernadette originally didn't want to push the transaction to this step, hoping to resolve the corruption issue on her father's body before this, thereby ending the vortex ritual, but ultimately, she had to face the current situation.

Many of her efforts had failed, and several of her backup plans either didn't have time to take effect, or lost their effect because she was restricted by her father in the mausoleum and unable to leave. She could only hope that the proclaimed inevitable outcome would come to pass.

Bernadette raised both hands, pushing the Magic Wishing Lamp and the second Blasphemy Slate towards midair.

The moment He saw these two items, Emperor Roselle fully understood all of True Creator Adam's arrangements and ultimate purpose.

He reached out His hand, distorting the distance between the Magic Wishing Lamp and Himself, making it fall directly into His palm.

The Blasphemy Slate first disappeared, then appeared in the hands of Amon, who was wearing a black pointed soft hat.

Holding the Magic Wishing Lamp, Roselle smiled calmly at Amon and said, "Now that I am the true Black Emperor, and deeply corrupted by the Uncertain Mist, I indeed might be able to do something with this Magic Wishing Lamp and the Genie inside it as a medium."

"It's not 'might', it's 'certainly'," Amon adjusted the monocle on His right eye, smiling as He corrected.

Roselle didn't say more. Holding the Magic Wishing Lamp, He half-closed His eyes, extending His consciousness to this golden object.

This brought along some of the white mist that had begun to erode His consciousness.

Vaguely, Roselle seemed to see another barrier standing between heaven and earth.

That barrier was wrapped in thin grayish-white fog, its specific

appearance indiscernible.
Soon, Roselle sensed a gap in the grayish-white fog, on that invisible barrier, but couldn't lock onto it.
At this moment, Amon pressed His right hand against the crystal monocle wedged in His eye socket.
That monocle suddenly lit up with a brilliance that seemed to illuminate the entire world.
Roselle's consciousness, preliminarily combined with the Uncertain Mist's corruption, instantly floated into the corresponding gap.
A haze immediately appeared before His "eyes".
Deep within that swirling smoke seemed to be hidden thirty-three layers of sky, each layer with numerous buildings faintly visible.
Roselle's consciousness quickly ascended, arriving at the highest layer of sky, coming to a majestic and grand palace.
He "saw" an incredibly enormous imperial figure, "saw" that the figure's face was masked by strings of jade, and beneath the jade strings seemed to be nothing, a void.
Roselle inexplicably felt that this enormous imperial figure was very similar to Himself, born from the same source, yet encompassing Him. A close connection was quickly established between the two.
This connection swiftly eroded Roselle's consciousness, yet was blocked by the corruption of the Uncertain Mist. They both merged and opposed each other.
Roselle momentarily regained some clarity.
A flash of inspiration struck Him, and using that close connection, He lowered His stance and said in His true mother tongue, "Imperial brother, please lend me your strength!"
That emperor with a face shielded by jade strings attached to a tall oriental crown suddenly stood up.
Behind Him, several similar imperial figures appeared, these figures each with different external appearances, but similarly with faces covered in jade strings, lacking faces, a complete void.
At the same time, all thirty-three layers of the sky deep within the haze lit up, revealing magnificent buildings and sacred figures.
Roselle's vision was instantly filled with azure light.
His consciousness suddenly returned to the Black Emperor divine body, seeing bursts of azure light erupting from within, dispersing and dissolving the white mist that had deeply eroded Him. Yet as time passed, the azure light and white mist began to show signs of merging in some places.
During this process, the Uncertain Mist did not withdraw its white mist. On the one hand, this was due to the barrier's obstruction

and the influence of the True Creator and Amon; on the other hand, the Uncertain Mist was following its own chaotic madness, following its instinctive desires and cravings, wanting to truly merge with the azure light.
Roselle increasingly felt as if He was another facet of the Uncertain Mist, the connection established between Them through the white mist quickly becoming unusually solid.
At this point, even if the Uncertain Mist wanted to recall that white mist, it couldn't be done instantly, requiring some time, unless Roselle agreed.
The ball of white mist from the vortex ritual involuntarily rose, flying towards Roselle's body. This terrified Perle, who was currently only able to survive with the help of this mist, while the Shadow of the Beauty Goddess and the miniature crimson moon in the mist both stopped advancing, standing still.
Roselle once again cast His gaze towards Amon, who was holding the Blasphemy Slate, and said with some emotion, "As expected of a Visionary..."
To dare to imagine this, to dare to arrange this!
Amon's previous answer had confirmed Roselle's initial and boldest guess was correct.
The true purpose of the True Creator using the vortex ritual was to deal with the Uncertain Mist, that great existence peering at the current world!
Normally, even if that True Creator and the six true gods in the astral world put aside Their grudges and fully cooperated, They couldn't accomplish such a thing, at most forcing the Uncertain Mist to retreat. But now, He had used the vortex ritual, used the Uncertain Mist's craving for the Black Emperor true god, allowing the Uncertain Mist to establish a firm and close connection with Himself, making Himself increasingly similar to the Uncertain Mist, thus creating a certain opportunity.
Of course, the so-called opportunity certainly wasn't to use this connection to transfer power over and directly attack the Uncertain Mist; that wouldn't lead to a very good effect. But in the mystical world, there were some underlying rules that could be exploited, many ways to defeat powerful existences by harming the weak, which was the basis of many curses.
As this thought flashed, Roselle began to rub His fingers over the golden surface of the Magic Wishing Lamp, covered in mysterious and complex symbols, muttering, "Genie!"
The wick at the spout suddenly ignited, emitting light that looked like viscous water, spurting upwards to form a blurred and distorted pale golden figure.

As soon as that pale golden figure appeared, He turned His head, about to dive back into the Magic Wishing Lamp, but the white mist and azure light eroding Roselle's Black Emperor divine body suddenly split off a large portion, like a bear smelling honey or a vampire placed next to a pool of fresh, healthy blood, violently surging around this pale golden figure, binding it layer upon layer, as if submerging it.
Genie twisted and struggled desperately, trying to escape this predicament and shrink back into the Magic Wishing Lamp, but couldn't succeed no matter what. His pale golden figure gradually showed signs of merging with the white mist and azure light.
Genie's mouth kept opening and closing, as if frantically cursing Amon and Roselle, but restrained by the white mist and azure light, He couldn't even make a sound.
Roselle raised the Magic Wishing Lamp and Genie to His chest level, distorting the relationship between the main body and external items, briefly making Himself an appendage of Genie.
In an instant, Genie, originally one with the Uncertain Mist and completely of the same source, seemed to become another facet of the Uncertain Mist again, yet was subjected to sealing, unable to exert His power, appearing quite weak!
Roselle looked at Amon again.
Now, before your authority over loopholes as a true god of the Error pathway, under this firm and close connection, from a mystical perspective, the weak Genie can completely equal the powerful Uncertain Mist. Severely injuring Genie would be equivalent to severely injuring the Uncertain Mist and making Genie fall asleep would be equivalent to making the Uncertain Mist fall asleep!
What happens next is up to the two of you!
Amon smiled and raised the Blasphemy Slate in His hand.
In the Forsaken Land of the Gods, atop the majestic and stretching mountain range, before a huge blood-stained cross.
The True Creator—Adam—who had shaken off the influence of the Outer God's ravings, was already waiting here.
He wore a simple white robe, had a thick golden beard, eyes as clear as a child's, and beneath His feet was a dense shadow, different from Him, with five heads. It seemed to be His, yet not His.
Adam opened His mouth and said solemnly and sacredly, "I am One, and also Infinity, the Beginning and the End."
As soon as He finished speaking, True Creator Adam's clear eyes instantly became illusory, and around His body appeared a strange sea that seemed to encompass all colors and all possibilities.

Immediately after, Adam grasped the silver cross pendant hanging on His chest.
Above His head, a blazing yet illusory sun leaped out. To His left, lightning, gale winds, and sea waves interwove to form an overlooking phantom. To His right, a white tower with numerous brass eyes rose from the ground.
These illusory, seemingly imagined authorities and symbols, along with Adam's own shadow, driven by the chaotic sea, merged into Adam's body one after another.
With a thunderous sound, that strange sea encompassing all colors and all possibilities surged up, submerging the entire mountain range, while Adam expanded into a huge figure of light that seemed capable of supporting heaven and earth.
This True Creator briefly returned to His peak state, and that human savior who had battled ancient gods appeared in the world once again!
He walked slowly on the chaotic and pitch-black "water surface", pointing His finger towards the sea that was both real and illusory.
With this pointing, the surface of the second Blasphemy Slate in Amon's hand quickly surged with chaotic seawater encompassing all colors and all possibilities.
Amon no longer held it directly, letting this mottled and ancient stone tablet float in front of His body.
He then looked towards the pale golden Genie that was frantically twisting while seemingly cursing Him, revealing a smile that made the other even more furious.
Then, He let that Blasphemy Slate rise up.

Chapter 884: The Future He Proclaimed

Chapter 884 The Future He Proclaimed

As the Blasphemy Slate in front of Amon rose up, the white mist corroding Roselle and Genie suddenly reacted, trying to break free and retreat back to the endless cosmos. But Roselle forcibly "held" it down, only allowing it to withdraw bit by bit.

Similarly, the pale golden Genie struggled desperately, trying to dive back into the Magic Wishing Lamp through the spout, but Roselle gave Him no such opportunity, firmly binding Him in front using the white mist and azure light.

Roselle turned His head to look down at the Black Emperor mausoleum, Distorting the distinction between inside and outside, and gave His eldest daughter Bernadette a smile that was both pained and satisfied.

He called out loudly, "Enjoy this world for me for a while!"

"Dad!" Queen Mystic Bernadette cried out, her cheeks glistening with tears.

Roselle said no more, turning His gaze back and standing upright.

He continued to resist the retraction of the white mist, tightly gripping Genie, then raised His chin and said to Amon in an authoritative and firm voice, "Do it."

Amon's monocle on His right eye instantly lit up with a strange radiance. He pressed down with both hands, causing the floating Blasphemy Slate before Him to heavily smash towards the pale golden Genie and Roselle who was "embracing" Genie.

The chaotic seawater encompassing all colors and possibilities transformed into a torrent, surging over mightily.

Drawn by this, the ball of white mist representing the vortex ritual, along with Perle, the Shadow of the Beauty Goddess, and the miniature crimson moon inside it, also rushed rapidly towards Genie and Roselle.

At this moment, within the vortex's white mist, a previously unexpanded point of light rapidly enlarged, revealing a dim and dark scene that seemed to correspond to both Fourth Epoch Trier and some unknown place.

From this scene, a delicate, slender, and beautiful white hand suddenly reached out, grabbing the distorted arm of the Shadow of the Beauty Goddess, and swiftly dragged this Grade 0 Sealed Artifact into its own light point. Both disappeared into the deep, blackish gloom.

Affected by the completion of this transaction, the miniature crimson moon formed by the Great Mother's corruption instantly arrived before the light point where a blurred figure was

suspended, about to permeate into it.
Amon was fully utilizing loopholes while also having to control that Blasphemy Slate and maintain its stability, so He could only barely spare a bit of attention to interfere.
He couldn't prevent the disappearance of the Shadow of the Beauty Goddess, only causing the miniature crimson moon to autonomously crumble and dissipate by nearly half.
The remaining miniature crimson moon drilled into the corresponding light point, entering the blurred human figure suspended in midair.
That figure wrapped in bandages, thorns, and roses suddenly had its belly swell up enormously, with obvious cracks appearing. From these crevices, arms covered in black tar-like liquid and protruding with scarlet eyeballs, skull heads, and mouths with teeth and tongues suddenly stretched out, tearing at the blurred figure's abdomen.
The next second, the white mist representing the vortex ritual covered the pale golden Genie, with all the light points within simultaneously extinguishing.
Genie cursed frantically and silently, but could only watch helplessly as the chaotic torrent encompassing all colors and possibilities surged towards Him along with the mottled, ancient, and gray stone tablet.
He was instantly submerged.
His body composed of pale golden viscous lamplight quickly disintegrated, reverting to tiny golden fragments.
These fine, pure gold light points were rapidly washed away and eliminated by the chaotic torrent, leaving not a trace behind.
In the blink of an eye, only an extremely dim blue-tinged white light remained of Genie.
This light, not completely decomposed by the chaotic torrent, pathetically shrank back into the golden Magic Wishing Lamp.
At this point, Roselle no longer needed to restrain Genie, nor did He need to arduously maintain the close connection between Himself and the Uncertain Mist.
He looked at the chaotic torrent surging before Him, raised His chin again, and opened His arms, as if an emperor embracing His own world.
In an instant, the chaotic torrent encompassing all colors and possibilities submerged Roselle's figure as well.
This resurrected Black Emperor's body quickly disintegrated, rapidly becoming ethereal.
"Dad..." Bernadette in the mausoleum below called out once more, but this time her voice was very low, like sleep-talking.

Almost simultaneously, outside the barrier, the white mist covering a certain planet suddenly contracted to its core, as if directly struck by the second Blasphemy Slate along with the chaotic torrent, revealing the weathered earth and dried-up seabed once again.
Immediately after, uncertain, dense white mist spread out again, with indescribable sounds echoing throughout the cosmos.
This caused even the extremely bright astral world to be covered by thin mist, making the entire world dim and dark.
The next second, the white mist, whose size and state were indescribable, detached from the previous planet.
That planet shattered silently, with various rocks and gasses ejecting outwards in waves.
Then, a chaotic sense encompassing all colors appeared on the surface of the dense, uncertain, and unviewable white mist.
It suddenly shrank, rapidly disappearing into the depths of the endless, dead, and dark cosmos.
...
On the streets of Trier, citizens saw the mist in the sky gradually dissipate, and the sun returned to normal—neither bright enough to blind human eyes nor dim as if at dusk.
The series of strange events that had just occurred were not forgotten by them, and the voice proclaiming "Emperor has returned" still lingered in their hearts.
"What exactly is happening to this world?" Many citizens had similar questions.
With these doubts and lingering fear, they turned their gaze to newsstands and nearby cathedrals.
On this day, mystical magazines like Psychic, Arcane, and Lotus sold out in Trier. Whether it was the Eternal Blazing Sun's cathedrals, God of Steam and Machinery's cathedrals, or The Fool's cathedral, all were packed with people.
Similarly, in cities large and small across the Northern and Southern Continents, like Backlund and Port Pylos, corresponding magazines were in short supply, and every cathedral was filled with believers.
...
Above the primitive island, Amon descended to a height level with the top of the Black Emperor mausoleum.
He looked at Queen Mystic Bernadette, who had just walked out of the mausoleum, and said in a deliberately indifferent tone, "For sixty years, the Uncertain Mist will not be able to come again. There will be one less danger to face at the time of the apocalypse.
"And as long as no new Black Emperor is born, as long as the order

of human society has not completely collapsed, or this mausoleum has not been completely destroyed, Roselle will be able to resurrect from nothingness after a hundred years. At that time, with three types of corruption on Him, He will achieve a basic balance and be able to maintain basic humanity and clarity."
At this point, Amon laughed and changed His tone. "This is the future He claims, and also His promise to you."
Without waiting for Bernadette to respond, Amon grabbed at the air and tossed a crown inlaid with many dark gems that had just appeared, along with the Magic Wishing Lamp, to Queen Mystic.
"As a guarantee of the promise, the Black Emperor's Uniqueness shall be given to you.
"As long as you don't die, no new Black Emperor will appear."
Bernadette caught the dimly glowing crown and said in a low voice, "I hope the future He claims will inevitably unfold."
Amon pinched the monocle on His right eye and chuckled softly.
"This is not something I can answer on His behalf. Anyway, I've received my payment, and the ritual was completed just now."
As soon as He finished speaking, Amon, who no longer had the status of a true god, languidly took back the Blasphemy Slate and three other rays of light, disappearing into midair.
...
In front of the destroyed bloody altar.
After the world's darkness and mist at high altitudes retreated, Madam Magician cast her gaze towards the western sky.
As an Angel closely connected to the spirit world, she had already learned from the spirit world about what had just happened and the fate of her Minor Arcana cards.
"What's wrong?" Miss Justice asked.
Madam Magician's expression was very complex, and her tone carried a slight sigh.
"That evil god who preached in the name of Truth has suffered a heavy blow and must sleep for decades.
"This is good news. There's one less major danger for humanity to face during the apocalypse, and there won't be any Brokers running around making connections before the apocalypse.
"But Emperor Roselle has perished because of this. He may only have a chance to resurrect and return after a hundred years, and also..."
Madam Magician didn't continue.
Ma'am Hermit, who had lifted her hearing seal, and other Major Arcana card holders like Miss Justice and Madam Judgment also had rather complex expressions.
...

In a room five or six meters high in the New City of Silver.
Lumian had already brought Franca, Jenna, Anthony, and the subsequently recovered Ludwig, Lugano, and others to this place that could guarantee their safety.
Looking at Lumian with his black hair scattered and delicate features, Franca wanted to tease him a bit, but felt that his mood wasn't quite right.
She had always known that Lumian had considered switching to the Demoness pathway. For faster advancement, as long as he maintained his sense of self, he could completely switch back to the Hunter pathway later and become a man again. So Franca originally thought Lumian had made the decision to switch to Demoness this time to deal with the dangerous situation, but after careful observation, she felt it wasn't like that.
If it had been his own choice, Lumian wouldn't have hidden suppression and pain under his calmness!
Thinking of this, Franca glanced at the sky outside that had returned to azure, and deliberately said, "The vortex event seems to have ended. Very good, very good. The apocalypse didn't come, this world wasn't destroyed, and we're all still alive!"
As long as we're still alive, there's still hope!
Jenna also pondered for a moment before asking Lumian, "Do you want a change of clothes?"
Lumian looked at the two Demonesses and Anthony, then at Ludwig who was eating frantically without caring that his godfather had become a woman, and Lugano who occasionally stole glances at him. He said in a slightly low voice, "I'll explain the specifics later. I'm going somewhere now."
"By yourself?" Jenna asked.
Lumian nodded gently.
Franca didn't try to persuade him. She took out a black cloak she had bought when disguising as a Witch from the Traveler's Bag and threw it to Lumian.
Lumian put on the cloak and activated the black mark on his right shoulder.
He teleported to a deep valley where an ancient church stood, its surface water-black and carved with human skulls.
This was the first cathedral built by the Aurora Order for that True Creator.
Lumian entered this deep black church, walking step by step to the huge black cross inside. Along the way, there were no human presences, nor any unknown things blocking him.
After stopping, Lumian, wearing the black cloak, looked at the male deity statue hanging upside down on the cross. His gaze

moved from the rusty iron nails piercing the deity's body and the fresh red blood rendered around them, all the way down to the face where all features were blurred except for the eyes, which were very clear, tightly closed, as if bearing all pain and guilt.

After staring for a few seconds, Lumian said in a low voice with a hint of magnetism, "One day, I will truly walk before you and tell you my answer."

After saying this, Lumian in his black cloak turned around and walked towards the outside of the cathedral.

At the same time, incandescent fireballs shot out from around him, flying towards different parts of this cathedral, flying towards the male deity statue hanging upside down on the black cross.

Rumble!

Pillars collapsed inside the cathedral, windows shattered, and corners were set ablaze.

Rumble!

The huge black cross was blasted to pieces, and the inverted statue crashed down, smashing into many fragments on the ground.

The statue's head separated from its neck, rolling a few times and becoming covered in dust.

Its face happened to face towards the silhouette of Lumian walking through the collapsing cathedral and raging flames, his black hair and cloak fluttering. The eyes remained tightly closed, as if bearing all pain and guilt.

God loves the world.

(End of Volume—Demoness)